Jürgen Weidner

Mount Olympus

Travel Guide

Ancient Sites
Museums
Monasteries and Churches

Jürgen Weidner

Mount Olympus

Ancient Sites

Museums

Monasteries and Churches

Imprint

© 2020 Jürgen Weidner

Author:	Jürgen Weidner
Assistance, emendation:	Ursula Weidner
Cover design, illustration:	Jürgen Weidner

The work is protected by copyright. Any use is prohibited without the consent of the author. This applies in particular to electronic or other duplication, translation, distribution and public disclosure.

This book is translated from the German original by the author. Title: Olymp, Antike Stätten, Museen, Klöster und Kirchen. It's registered at the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library) under idn = 1215964374

Cover: Statue of Alexander the Great, Alexandrion, Litochoro (Photo: Jürgen Weidner)

The images of the monasteries and churches are used with the kind permission of the Archdiocese of Kitros, Katerini and Platamonas.

Warm thanks to my friends Heidi Milde and Jorgos Arzanas for polishing my English, thank you for your lot of work!

Table of Contents

Welcome....1
At Mount Olympus....2
Some Useful Tips....4
How to get to the sights and how to translate the book into other languages....4
General Map....6
Dion....7
Swimming in the Ourlias River....8
The Ancient Site....9
The Archaeological Park....10
The Ancient City....18
Archaeological Museum....26
Hydraulis of Dion....29
Dionysus Mosaic....33
Leptokarya....35
Leivithra, the World of Orpheus and the Muses....37
Olympus Geological History Museum....43
Monastery Kanalon....46
Palaios Pandeleimonas, one of the most Beautiful Villages of Greece....48
Church Agios Pandeleimon....50
Litochoro....53
Swimming in the River Enipeas....54
Monastery Agios Dionysios....55
Olympus National Park Information Center....59
Nautical Museum....62
Alexandrion....64
Chapel of the Prophet Elias (Elijah), Mount Olympus....66
Platamonas and Skotina....68
Castle of Platamonas, disputed Checkpoint between Land and Sea....69
Church Agios Athanasios, Ano Skotina....71
Vrondou....74
Swimming near Agia Kori....75
Church Agios Nicholaos....76
Church Agia Triada....79
Chapel of Agia Kori....82
Kondariotissa....85
Monastery Ephraim....86
Church Panagia....89
A little bit outside but really worth visiting!....91
Pydna, and the end of the Macedonian Kingdom....91
Louloudies, once a Magnificent Bycantine Fortress....96
Macedonian Tombs at Korinos....99
Monastery Panagia Makrirachi....102
Monastery Agios Athanasios....105
History and Archaeology — an Overview....108
Glossary....112
Epilogue....114
About the Author....115
Important Phone Numbers....116

Welcome

Pieria offers a unique taste of the Mediterranean in a soothing combination of sea, plains and mountains. Mount Olympus and the abundance of chapels, churches and holy monasteries along with a variety of places of religious importance to pilgrims or visitors are what make our region so unique. Some of these places date back at least 1000 years.

Bishop's Seat in Katerini

The small chapel of Prophet Elijah is located on one of the peaks of Mount Olympus, being the highest holy site of the Balkans and of Orthodox Christianity worldwide.

A historical fact frequently unnoticed is that Saint Paul the Apostle, whose Epistles are of critical importance in Holy Scripture visited Pieria on his second Apostolic Journey about 50 years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, making thus our region one of the earliest places where Christianity thrived. We wholeheartedly invite you to visit our Ecclesiastical Museum and follow the Traces of the Apostle.

You are most welcome to one of Greece's most historic and beautiful places. We hope and pray that you will enjoy your stay.

† GEORGIOS

Metropolitan of Kitros, Katerini and Platamon.

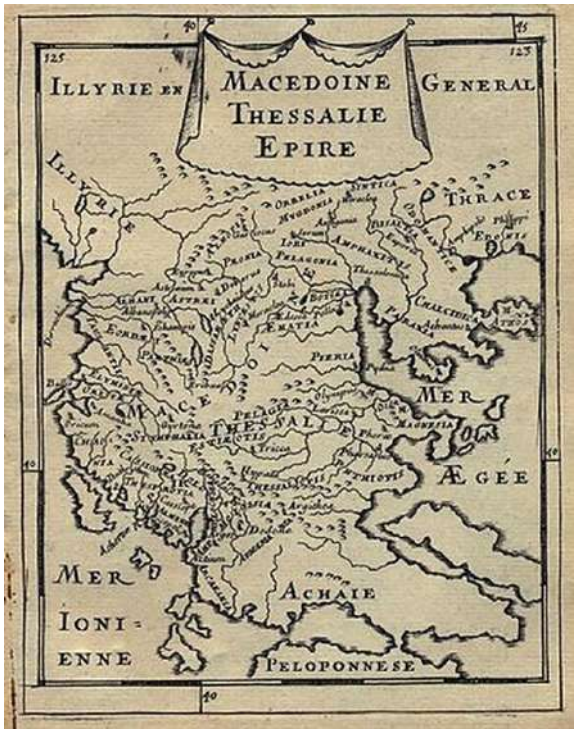
At Mount Olympus

Some information in advance

The border between Thessaly and Macedonia runs across the peaks of Mount Olympus. The Macedonian side of the mountains is located in the prefecture of Pieria, the name for this beautiful area has existed since ancient times.

The prefecture of Pieria forms the southernmost part of Central Macedonia and is in turn divided into three municipalities. It is home to more than 100000 people who live mainly from agriculture and tourism.

Pieria was settled approximately 6500 years ago, during the Neolithic period. Historically, the region was represented by the resident Macedonians, whose most prominent representatives were Alexander the Great and his father, Philip II.



Map of Ancient Macedonia

The first members of the Macedonian royal family came from the peninsula Peloponnese from the town of Argos, therefore they are called Argeads. The foundation of the kingdom took place around 700 B. C. The history was changeable, one was almost constantly in conflict with the neighbours. The territory of the kingdom was to be extended, the Macedonians wanted to gain access to gold and silver mines on the peninsula of Chalkidiki and in Thrace.

Philip II revolutionized the warfare of the time by introducing the phalanx. Its soldiers, the phalangites, were equipped with spears up to six meters long, the sarissa. Even for enemy cavalry they were difficult to overcome. Philip's son, Alexander, who was later given the byname "the Great", started a campaign directed against Persia, which ended with the creation of the huge Alexander Empire. After Alexander's death, the Argead dynasty was ousted by the Antigonids. The end of the Macedonian royal house came by the Battle of Pydna. The Romans won this war and Macedonia became a Roman province.

Excavation sites and monuments such as Dion, Leivithra, the origins of the castle of Platamonas, Pydna and the great Macedonian tomb of Korinos bear witness to this epoch.

Another formative personality was the apostle Paul. On his second missionary journey he passed through Pieria. Thus, the people on Olympus came into contact with Christianity very early and directly.

The apostle came from the city of Veria, where he was accused by followers of the Jewish faith. Paul fled, preached in several places in Pieria and thus created the foundation of the Christian faith in the region. He traveled on the route Livadi, Kolindros, Aeginio, Methone and Pydna. Archaeological evidence and local tradition refer to his special activities in Kolindros. He is said to have preached the Gospel there before he traveled to Pydna to go from there by ship to Athens. In his later travels he crossed Pieria on the historic road that still exists today, heading south.

Very early monasteries and churches were built at Mount Olympus. Today only ruins are left of the original buildings of these times, but at some of the places where the apostle had preached monasteries can be visited.

Today the Archdiocese of Kitros, Katerini and Platamonas is responsible for most of the monasteries and churches at Mount Olympus. The bishop's seat is located directly at the city park of Katerini (**Map and navigation**). Worth seeing is the Episcopal Museum, which is also used for receptions on special occasions.

Detailed information about **History and Archaeology** on Mount Olympus can be found at the end of the book in the chapter of the same name.

Apostle Paul

Some Useful Tips

How to get to Mount Olympus

- By car on highway No. 1, Athens - Thessaloniki
- By plane to Makedonia Airport (SKG), Thessaloniki. Here you can rent a car or take a taxi or bus number 78 who will take you to the train station.
- The trains stop in Katerini, Litochoro (the train station is about 5 km east of the village), Leptokarya and Neoi Poroi, near Platamonas.
- By country bus to Katerini. From there you will get to your final destination by local buses.

Accommodation

On the entire "Olympus Riviera", from Katerini to Neoi Poroi you will find plenty of accommodation that will fit your needs.

How to get to the sights and how to translate the book into other languages

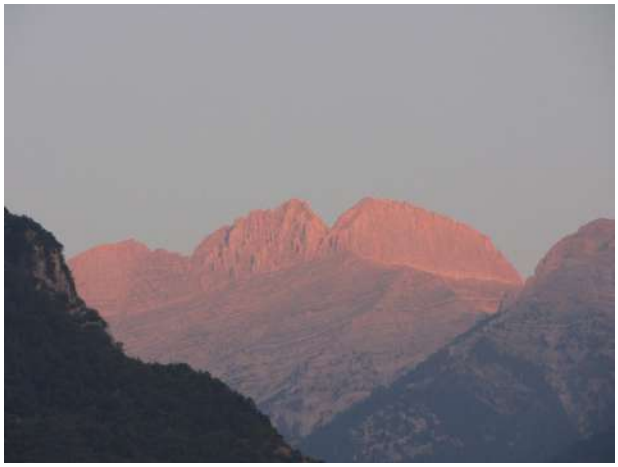
Navigation

At the beginning of a chapter, you will find the section "**Most important"**.

In order to be able to find the sights easily, their coordinates are given in the last line.

For example: **Map and navigation**

Click on these link and you'll get to "Google Maps". The exact location of the sight is shown on the map.



The Peaks of Olympus in the Morning Light

Google offers the possibility to use the cell phone as a navigation device. First switch on the "GPS" or "Location" function on your device. After you have touched the "Route" icon (bottom left) you will be shown the traffic connections from your location to your destination. Tap on the "Start" icon and you will be guided to your destination.

There may be differences in handling due to different operating systems.

Translation

To translate the text into other languages, I suggest the use of the "Google Translate" app (you'll find it in your app store). The app works offline, the translation is usually of good quality. Simply copy the text you are interested in and paste it into "Google Translate". If you are online, the app will also read the translation to you, so you have the feeling of a personal guide. Feel free of course to use any other translation service you like.

Opening hours

Since the opening hours differ not only in the summer and winter months, but some sights are only open sporadically, it can be useful to inform yourself about this before your visit. If available, the telephone numbers are listed under the headline "**Most important"**.

As a rule of thumb, one can assume that in the summer, almost all described destinations are opened at 10.00 a. m.

Entrance fees

- Admission to all monasteries and churches is free.
- The Nautical Museum in Litochoro and the Geological Museum of Olympus in Leptokaria charge a small entrance fee.
- There is an entrance fee to the Archaeological Park of Dion, the Archaeological Museum of Dion and the Castle of Platamonas. On the following days there the entrance is free:
- March 6 (in memory of Melina Mercouri)
- April 18 (International Monuments Day)
- May 18 (International Museums Day)
- The last weekend of September (European Heritage Days)
- October 28 (Greek National Day)
- Every first Sunday of the month from November 1st to March 31st

Glossary

I have tried to use technical terms sparingly. If a term is unknown to you, so you will probably find it in the **Glossary** at the end of the book.

German Version / Deutsche Ausgabe

Falls Sie dieses Buch lieber in deutscher Sprache lesen möchten finden Sie es hier:

If you prefer to read this book in German you'll find it here: **bit.ly/Olymp-20-GZ**

General Map

This Map was Created with Data from the Open Street Map Foundation.

Ancient sites **Museums** **Monasteries and Churches**

Dion

Dion is located on the northeastern edge of Mount Olympus. It is five km from the sea, during the Hellenistic period, the distance was only 1.5 km. Dion is connected to the sea by the once navigable Vaphyras River.

Mosaic Center

Until 1961, the current village Dion was called Malathria. The main source of income for the residents is agriculture, animal breeding and tourism.

For traditional reasons, Dion has developed into one of the most important centers in Greece, where the art of mosaic is cultivated. For ages, artists have lived in the vicinity of the ancient site, which keep this tradition alive and teach their skills to interested people in seminars. For this purpose, a "mosaic center" was founded, which is also used for exhibitions in the summer months.

Mosaic, Classical Motif

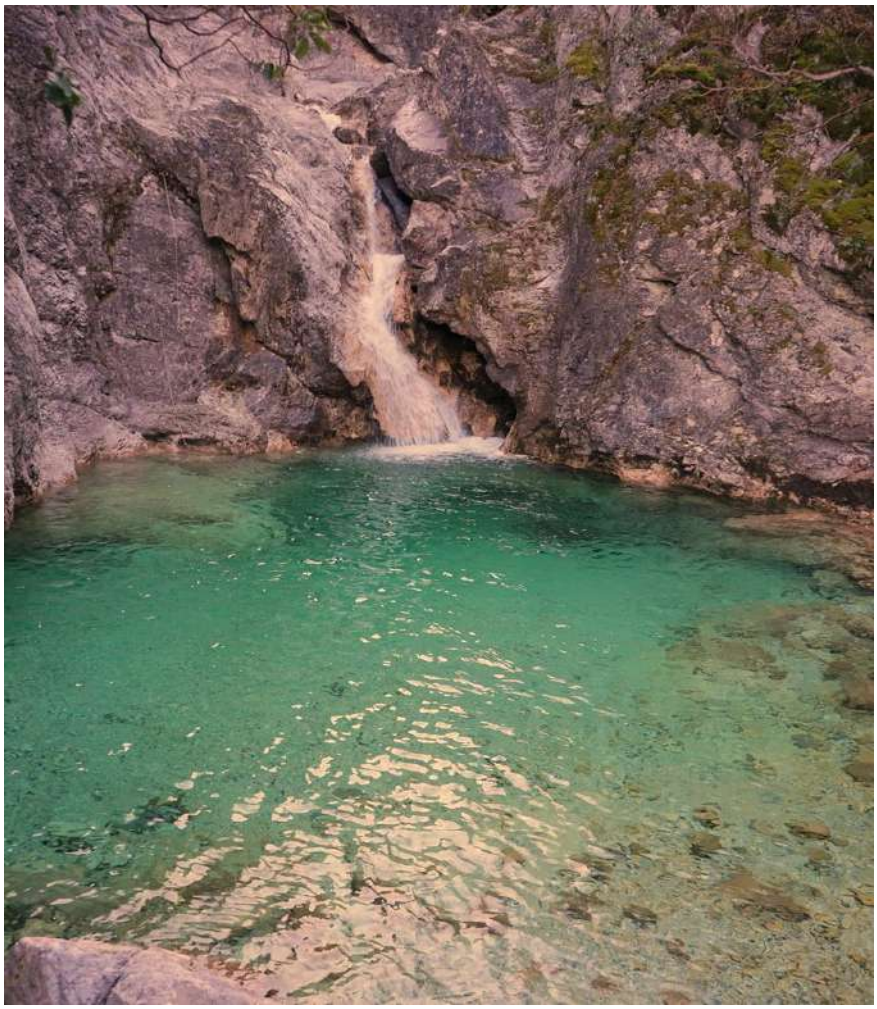
Tavligame with Surrounding Meander

Swimming in the Ourlias River

If you are tired after a tour of the Archaeological Park and the Museum, you can take a dip in the crystal-clear water of the Ourlias River (also called Helikon). It can be found around 5.5 km west of Dion.

Map and navigation

Simply follow the signs to "Olympus". After a short walk you will reach the Ourlias gorge. Even in summer, the waterfall is constantly supplying cool water.



The Ourlias

The Ancient Site

Most important

- One of the most important ancient sites in Greece
- Founded in the 5th century BC, for around a thousand years inhabited
- Sanctuaries and buildings from the Classical to the Byzantine period
- In the 5th century AD, the city was abandoned by its inhabitants.
- Despite decades of excavation, Dion has not been fully explored yet.
- Video about the Archaeological Park of Dion
- Video about the restoration of the Dionysus Mosaic
- For further information see the book „DION - The Archaeological Site and the Museum“ written by Prof. Dimitrios Pandermalis. ISBN: 960-500-080-6
- Phone: 23510-53484
- **Map and navigation**

Some History

424 BC the Greek historian Thucydides described Dion as the first city reached by the Spartan general Brasidas, coming from Thessaly (Tempi), to Macedonia. Pausanias mentioned Dion as one of the places where Orpheus lived. In the Classical period, Dion became the religious center of Macedonia. Zeus was worshiped here and the Olympic Games in honor of Zeus and the Muses were held. Alexander the Great made a sacrifice at the Zeus sanctuary before he began his campaign against the Persians. Later he had set up 25 bronze statues of the cavalrymen, killed in the Battle of Granicus, in the Zeus Olympios sanctuary. They were crafted by the famous sculptor Lysippos.

219 BC Dion was destroyed by the Aitolian, but Philip V had the city rebuilt immediately. The Romans conquered Dion 168 BC and gradually, Roman settlers came and brought with them their administration, their measures and weight units. In 31 BC, Octavian declared Dion as a colony that was exempt from tax payments and had a certain autonomy.

After the middle of the 3rd century AD, the decline started by raids of neighboring tribes, earthquakes and floods. In the 4th century AD, Dion (Dium) last flourished when it became a bishopric. The place was last mentioned as an administrative district of the Byzantine emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos (Constantine VII) in the 10th century.

The Archaeological Park

Entrance of the Archaeological Park

The park covers an area of 150 hectares, of which almost 50 hectares are urban and about 50 hectares are sanctuaries. A lot of the area has not yet been archaeologically explored. In the Archaeological Park, sanctuaries and monuments from the Classical, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods were discovered. Among other things residential buildings, a marketplace, public buildings, churches, bathhouses, shops, workshops and toilets have been found in the former urban area. Outside are the sanctuaries, the theaters and the cemeteries.

Let's start exploring the park in the area outside the city walls. We follow the path that leads us past the pond, one of the sources of the Vaphyras River, and turn right (south) to the Hellenistic Theater.

The Area Outside the City Walls

Hellenistic Theater

It is set against the great backdrop of Mount Olympus. Follow the path and stand in the middle of the stage (orchestra). You are now exactly at the place where Alexander the Great spoke to his officers before his campaign against the Persians.

Architecture

The shape of the theater corresponds to the typical Hellenistic style of construction. It is an open-air theater built in a north-east direction on the slope of a low hill. The orchestra (stage) was built on clay soil and was surrounded by a trench to drain the rainwater. Underneath the orchestra, an underground corridor was connecting two rooms.

Unique among the Hellenistic theaters was the kind of seats of the auditorium, the koilon. The semicircular rows of seats were covered with 50 by 50 cm clay bricks. The current form of the building is the result of a modern reconstruction upon the antique foundations. The rows of seats in the spectator area are now covered with wooden boards.

History

The theater was built during the Hellenistic period, probably during the reign of King Philip V. A former theater was probably destroyed during the raid of the Aitolians. Inside the building, a larger number of coins from the reign of Philip V was found. In Roman times, useful building materials were removed and used to build the Roman theater near the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios.

King Archelaus held a nine-day festival in Dion in honor of the nine Pieric Muses, which also included theater competitions. He invited the Athenian playwright Euripides, who wrote the dramas "Archelaus" and the "Bacchae". Both works were probably, also performed in Dion.

After completion of all renovations, the theater has been regularly hosting performances of the Olympus Festival since 1991.

Alexander III (the Great)

Reign from 336 B.C. to 323 B.C.

No other Macedonian king shaped world history like Alexander the Great. His father, Philip II, left him a functioning state and an army that was the most modern armed force in Eurasia at the time. Since Philip II married several women, it was by no means clear who would follow him to the throne. In the end, Alexander and his mother Olympias prevailed.

334 B.C. the campaign of the Macedonians against the Persians began. His first battle, at the river Kranikos, ended with the victory of Alexander. Also the following battle of Issos (333 B.C.) was a success for the Macedonians, the Persian king Darius fled the battlefield. Finally Persia was subdued by Alexander. The spoils of war enabled him to continue his campaign. He led him to India, to the edge of the then known world.

Alexander died in the year 323 B.C. in Babylon.

Alexanders arrival in Babylon

The ancient stadium, an important venue for the Olympic Games in Dion, was very close to the theater.

The Stadium

Although known since the discovery (in the beginning of the 19th century) by William M. Leake, the excavations of the stadium didn't take place until 1995. During the excavations, many coins were found, the oldest are from the time of Alexander I. After the Second World War, the inhabitants of Malathria (then the name of the village, today Dion) expanded the agricultural land and their settlement area. So as the village expanded, most of the stadium was overbuilt.

Go back the path that led you to the theater about 100 m. Turn right (heading southeast) and follow the small path that leads you around the Zeus Olympios sanctuary to the Roman theater.

Roman Theater

The Roman theater was built in the 2nd century AD. It had 24 rows of seats arranged in a semicircle, beneath them were built vaults. The orchestra had a diameter of about 21 m. The building consisted of field stones, bricks and mortar. The stage was decorated with marble elements. Among the exhibits excavated here was a statue of Hermes.

After visiting the theater, turn north and walk over to the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios.

Zeus Olympios Sanctuary

A huge temple was placed in a sacred grove, dedicated to Zeus. Within were the gilded statues of the Macedonian kings and also 25 statues donated by Alexander the Great in memorial to his cavalrymen killed in the Battle of Granicus. The central square within the site was occupied by a 22-meter altar. On metal rings, sacrificial animals were tied. At the sacrificial celebrations (Hecatomb), the most important part of the Zeus cult, 100 cattle were sacrificed to the god. In their attack on Dion, the Aitolians destroyed the sanctuary, which was rebuilt immediately. Remains of the wall, surrounding the site, are still preserved.

Now keep right and walk on a winding path between trees and bushes. It is worth taking a look at the Vaphyras, with a little luck you can watch some trouts. This small jungle is home to many animals, the dragonflies are particularly beautiful, but we have also come across a fox here.

Turn right (east) at a fork in the road and you'll arrive at the second Zeus sanctuary in Dion. It was discovered by chance when the riverbed of the Vaphyras River was moved a few meters to the west.

Vaphyras

Although no separate sanctuary was built for it, the river Vaphyras was considered a male deity. Its source gushes about 100 meters east of the park entrance. Here probably grew the sacred grove of the Muses. The head of a statue, representing the personified river, was found in the source area. According to Hesiod, the Vaphyras springs from the cosmic stream Okeanos, which is ruled by the primeval goddess Tethys.

The Vaphyras

The Vaphyras is closely interwoven in Greek mythology with Orpheus and the Muses. In the 2nd century AD, Pausanias wrote that the upper reaches of the Vaphyras bore the name Helikon. For two-thirds of its length, the river runs underground before reappearing in Dion. According to Pausanias the inhabitants of Dion claimed that once the Helikon flew along Dion. But when the women who had killed Orpheus tried to wash the blood off their hands in the Helikon, the river dried up, wanting no part in this deed. In Dion, he did reappear on the surface.

Zeus Hypsistos Sanctuary

A road led to the sanctuary of Zeus-Hypsistos. It was lined by small pillars, with marble eagles on their top. The street led to a square where a temple with several rooms existed. In the northernmost room, the Zeus Temple, there was a statue of Zeus Hypsistos and the figure of a marble eagle. The floor

around the statue was decorated with mosaics, of which the image of two ravens can still be seen. The floor of the building itself was also covered with mosaic. Here a white bull and double axes were preserved. On the western side, there is a pool of water. In front of the temple are the remains of an altar. A metal ring was fastened on it, which served to tie up the sacrificial animals. Both gods, Zeus Hypsistos and Zeus Olympios, were worshiped simultaneously. While Olympios ruled the people from the summit of Mount Olympus, Hypsistos dominated the sky, everything supernatural.

The Zeus Cult in Dion

Dion was the religious center of Macedonia. At the time of the reign of the Macedonian kings, the temple of Zeus Olympios was the most important sanctuary in the city. It is not yet clear whether Dion got its meaning from the Olympic Games initiated by King Archelaus, or whether, perhaps inspired by Homer's Iliad, it already had a central role for the region. Deukalion claimed, that after the sanctuary of Zeus Lykaios, the second oldest altar dedicated to Zeus was erected in Dion. From the late 8th century BC Zeus was worshiped in various parts of Greece. All these venerations had in common that they took place on the top of a mountain, or near a mountain. Inscriptions, clay pots and remnants of charcoal from the Hellenistic and Roman periods on peak Agios Antonios (2817 m) near Dion, testify that the cult of Zeus was practiced not only in Dion itself. The Macedonian kings used the temple complex to archive their royal decrees. Some of them are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Dion.

If you climb the metal tower, you can see the Isis sanctuary across the stream. Unfortunately, it cannot be reached from here, since the bridge that led over the Vaphyras was destroyed by a flood. So go back the same way you came, but after about 70 m turn right and walk the short distance to Sanctuary of Demeter.

Zeus

As the so-called godfather, Zeus throned above all the other gods of Olympus. He is the son of the titans Kronos and Rhea.

Zeus is often depicted with a bundle of lightning bolts, his scepter and the mighty shield Aigis. His heraldic animal is the eagle.

Zeus is the most powerful of the gods, but he is not allmighty. So it happend that he also listend to the advice of his divine colleagues or the prophecies of an oracle.

He is able to change his shape, an ability that he made frequent use of. His transformations as a bull when he robs Europe or as a swan when he seduces Leda are well-known.

Demeter Sanctuary

Demeter

Like her brother Zeus, Demeter is a daughter of the titans Kronos and Rhea.

Her attributes are stalks of wheat and seeds of the poppy.

Her task is to take care of the growth of the plants and the reproduction of the animals, to make sure that the humans have enough food.

When her daughter Persephone was abducted by Hades into the underworld, she forbade the plants to grow and the animals to reproduce. Only when Persephone was allowed to live on the surface of the earth for a part of the year did she withdraw her spell.

It consisted of several temples. The believers worshiped the goddess from archaic age to the era of the Roman Empire. In the immediate vicinity is the sanctuary of Asclepius. The connection of both places of worship also exists in other archaeological sites in Greece.

In an open but walled room, the goddess was offered liquid sacrifices. From here came the oldest finds of the sanctuary. End of the 4th century BC two Doric temples replaced the previous archaic buildings. Smaller buildings were dedicated to the deities of the earth such as Baubo and Kourotrophos. From them, the population requested rich crop yields. Herbal sacrifices, such as cereals or fruit, were spread on so-called cult tables. Archaeological finds and records assign water to an important role in the Demeter cult. It was a duty of the priestesses to ensure that always pure water was available. In addition to its use in cleaning rituals, it was of course seen as a necessary good to allow the growth of the plants. Two circular fountains are among the oldest buildings of the sanctuary.

Another temple served the worship of Aphrodite. The believers hoped for help to increase their fertility. In front of the buildings were altars on which sacrifices were made to the chthonic (in the underworld living) deities.

In addition to the usual finds, such as statues, potsherds, jewelry, oil lamps etc., a ringstone from the Mycenaean times was also found. It dates from the 15th to the 14th century BC and shows a schematically represented lion in front of a tree. The artifact gives an indication of the earlier settlement of Dion. In 1990, the foundations of an altar were discovered east of the temple. At the same point where in 1973 the head of a statue of Demeter was found.

In late antiquity, kilns were operated on the site of the Demeter sanctuary. They were used to make building material (bricks, etc.). Furthermore, a workshop was built, which produced objects of daily use and for cult practices in the sanctuaries.

A few meters to the south you will find the remains of the sanctuary of Asclepius.

Asclepius Sanctuary

The Asclepion dates from the 4th century BC. Deliberately, a place was chosen for it where there was enough water. It played a special role in the practice of Asclepius cult and was needed for religious activities. So far, the foundations of a building with two rooms have been exposed. The discovery of a toilet near the sanctuary indicates that people (pilgrims) spent some time there.

To get into the city, head north on the main path. After crossing the street, enter the area of the ancient city and follow the direction sign to the Sanctuary of Isis. You'll walk on the remains of the ancient city wall and pass the remains of the Villa Zosa. Replicas of some finds are on display here. You can see the originals in the Archaeological Museum.

Isis Sanctuary

The youngest of the sanctuaries in Dion is the sanctuary of Isis. It was not built until the 2nd century AD on the site of a former fertility sanctuary. It has a considerable size and is crossed by a channel that symbolizes the Nile. The main entrance is in the east, a smaller entrance is located on the north side of the sanctuary. The temple and altar of Isis Lochia (Isis as guardian of the child bed) are framed in the western part by two temples of Isis Tyche and Aphrodite Hypolympiada. In the ground, a basin is embedded, from which water still gushes out from the spring. In the cult of the Isis, the water took on a sacred meaning. In a room, to the north of the temple complex, statues of the patrons of the sanctuary were erected.

Isis

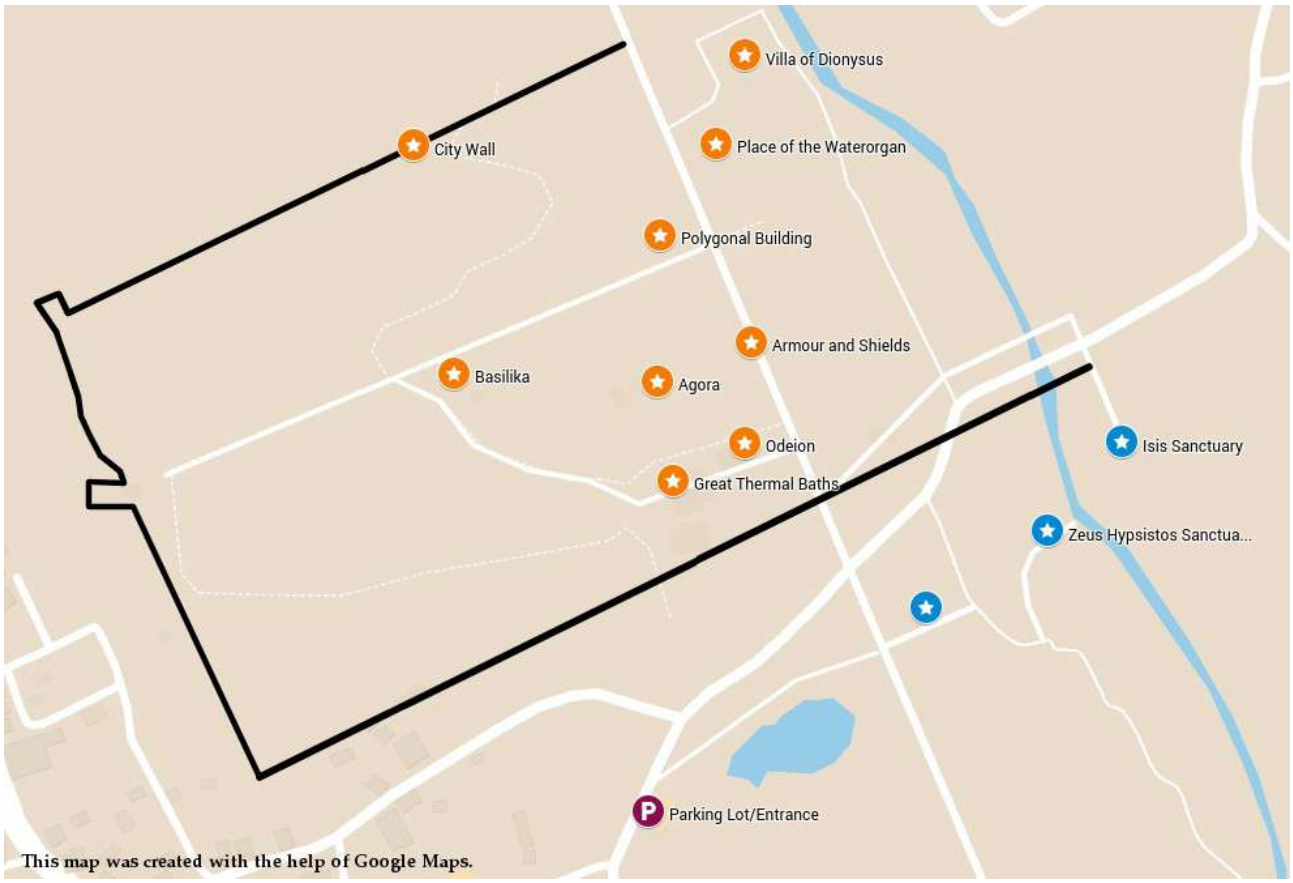
She came from Egypt and was the wife of the god Osiris.

Isis was considered the goddess of birth, but also the goddess of death.

The Romans learned about the cult of Isis in the Egypt they conquered and brought it with them to Dion. The goddess was equated by them with Demeter or also Aphrodite.

The Ancient City

We have to consider that in Dion one encounters the remnants of different epochs. Although one also find ruins from the Classical and Hellenistic period outside the city, Roman monuments and buildings from early Christianity dominate within the city walls. The remnants of much older buildings may be underneath. The urban area is still largely unexplored.



The Ancient City with the Places of the Most Important Finds.

The City Walls

If you fancy a slightly longer walk, you can stroll around the city walls. Information boards will inform you about further sights near the wall.

Since Dion was one of the few ancient Greek cities lying on a plain, it was essential to build a wall to defend the city against attackers. In the east, the swamp area of the Vaphyras provided some protection, but otherwise, there was no natural hill and therefore no acropolis. Dion had approximately a square

King Philipp V

Reign from 221 B.C. to 179 B.C

When his father died, Philipp was still a child. Antigonus III Doson therefore took control of the empire until his death.

221 B.C. Antigonus III left his pupil a strong and orderly kingdom that ruled over large parts of Greece via the Hellenic League.

Philipp succeeded in consolidating Macedonia's position within the Confederation. His next goal was to expand the national territory. To this end, he waged several wars against his neighbors. In the second Punic War he concluded in 215 BC. an alliance with the Carthaginian general Hannibal. He hoped to be able to set a foot in the Roman Empire. The Roman fleet repeled the attack by the Macedonians, and Philipp had triggered the first war between Macedonia and Rome. In the Peace of Phoinike the dispute ended in 205 BC. 197 BC Philipp lost again to the Romans in the battle of Kynoskephalai. After his death, his son Perseus took over the rule of the kingdom.

outline. The city wall was built between 305 and 298 BC, under the rule of King Cassander, mostly from the limestone of the Olympus. It was 2625 meters long, 2.60 to more than 3 m thick and seven to ten meters high. The western side has a length of 642 m, the southern and northern section each of 682 m. The eastern part of the fortification has not been fully excavated yet. At a distance of 33 m (100 doric feet á 32.8 cm) were towers with a floor area of seven times seven m. In order to be able to defend the city more effectively, they were built at the outer line of the bulwark. In the southern and northern part of the wall were two city gates, in the western part one gate was found.

At the Vaphyras River, in the east of the city, probably a port facility had been. After the attack of the Aitolians, who partially destroyed the city walls, Philip V had the protection wall repaired. Around 197 BC, at the time when the threat to Macedonia by the Romans was growing, Dion was the headquarters of Philip V.

During the Roman rule, little attention was given to the walls, and in some places, the walls fell apart. They were repaired when the raids on Dion happened more frequently in the 3rd century AD. In places, it is visible that stones and bricks have been placed on the base of the wall, which also today consists of massive blocks of stone. Old sculptures and remnants of other buildings (spolia) were also used as a building material. Flooding in the early Christian period greatly reduced the size of the city. New walls were built on the north and east sides. Here, too, craftsmen used field stones and spolia like the remains of columns, sculptures and altars, as building materials. The new enclosure had only a length of 1595 m. In the 5th century AD, an earthquake probably destroyed the walls. It was not rebuilt afterward. The lack of protection may have been one of the reasons why the population gradually abandoned the city.

I suggest starting the tour of the city towards the large thermal baths. After visiting the Isis sanctuary, your path leads you to the main street. Walk a few meters on it, then turn left. On the left you will see one of the public toilet facilities. The Roman emperor Vespasian (9 to 79 AD) introduced a tax on the use of public toilets. He made the famous saying "Pecunia non olet" (money does not stink).

Follow the path that takes you after a few meters to the Odeion.

The Odeion

History and construction

The odeion is part of the large Roman bath. The external dimensions are 28.46 by 19.46 m, it offered 400 seats, which were arranged in the form of an amphitheater around the semicircular orchestra. The excavations of the odeion began in September 1977 and lasted two years. Archaeologists found the components of an antique theater with orchestra, koilon, four internal stairs, stage and two L-shaped staircases. Carefully executed masonry combined Roman architecture with local craftsmanship. An essential static element was the 1.55 m thick outer wall. It caught the lateral pressure of the koilon and supported the roof. The outer walls of the building were built of limestone and fired bricks. The excavations showed large cracks in the walls as well as the lowering of the floor and some walls indicating to a strong earthquake followed by a fire. In 1990, once again excavations were carried out to measure the entire floor plan of the odeion for the planned restoration. Thereby shards from the Classical period came to light.

Restoration

The natural stresses to which the remnants of the odeion were exposed, heat, frost and moisture, destroyed building materials such as mortar or wood over the centuries. The binding effect of the mortar subsided and the remaining foundation walls fell apart. The top part of the structure suffered the most, large blocks broke and fell down. The aim of the restoration was to reinforce and preserve the remains of the odeion. The old mortar was sealed and cracks in the masonry closed with fresh cement. The fallen stones were returned to their original place and fixed. The final work consisted of building a straight, the upper weight bearing area from surrounding stones and covering them with specially made bricks. Experts from the University of Thessaloniki examined the building materials and their ingredients. The material of the new bricks corresponds to that of the antique bricks. The composition of the mortar matches its antique original. The construction was covered with lead before restoration. Thus, the old structure is strictly separated from the newly applied building materials. The floor of the odeion was covered with pebbles and the architectural elements found at the site, such as columns, were erected on their former positions.

The site on which the largest bathing facility in Dion is located starts just a few meters to the west. Follow the iron walkways and pay attention to the mosaics, the remains of the hypocaust system and the water supply.

The Thermal Baths

Common to all thermal baths is the structure of the bathing area in pools with different temperatures including a cold water basin (frigidarium). Also, the type of heating, by a hypocaust system, is the same for all the mentioned baths. Except for the bathing facility west of the basilica, all thermal baths were built during the era of the Severus Dynasty (193-235 AD). Some of them were operated until the beginning of the 5th century. The construction of the bath near the basilica is dated to the middle of the 4th century. After the city was partially flooded (see also "The City Walls"), the baths on the main street, east of the Monument of Armor and Shields, and the Villa of Dionysus were abandoned. The baths within the reduced urban area continued to operate.

The Hypocaustum

It is an ancient heating system that was used to heat both, floors and walls.

On solid ground, small pillars or arches made of bricks were placed at small distances which supported the ground. The smoke from the fire, stoked in the praefurnium, flowed under the ground and warmed it. Occasionally they were led through walls through a pipe construction to the chimneys. The floors were often covered with terracotta tiles or mosaic.

The large Thermal Baths

The complex measures about 41 x 50 m in size covering an area of more than 2000 m². Through the entrance to the east one entered the building. To the central hall (about 13 times 19 m) more rooms were attached. In the walls of the Frigidarium (approx. 8 x 8 m) niches were embedded in which probably sculptures were standing. The floors were covered with mosaic, parts of it are still preserved. In the Frigidarium the traces of an earthquake are visible. The bottom of the pool is divided into two, one can clearly see the significant difference of the ground level. A water tank with the base area of 4.30 by 4.50 m supplied the system with water. The wastewater was drained to clean the public toilets. There were rooms where Asklepios was worshiped. Since the baths also served as a place for social events, an odeion for readings, plays or musical performances, was integrated into the complex. The bathrooms also included shops and toilets.

Furthermore, smaller thermal baths were discovered inside and outside the city area.

The area where the market (Agora) was located is north of the Odeon and the large thermal baths. Get an overview of its size and the variety of buildings once surrounding it as you walk the path to the basilica.

The Market (Agora)

The Agora

She played the central role of the social life of the citizens of a Greek city. It served as a place of justice and as a marketplace to supply the residents with goods for their everyday life. The presence of an agora was considered one of the characteristics of a Greek city.

Festivals were celebrated here; one met with friends, discussed politics and in times of democracy the people decided on the fate of the city.

It is an open space, once surrounded by shops and halls. On the side facing the mountains, in the middle of the building surrounding the market, there was a temple (Sebasteion), presumably dedicated to the Roman emperors. The floor is slightly above the level of the marketplace and is covered with mosaic. Inside were remnants of mural paintings and fragments of male statues. To the east of the square, opposite the temple, stood a Roman basilica. Under the supervision of the local authority, the basilica has been used for banking and concluding commercial contracts. The curia was attached to the southern part of the building. The senate of Dion met in it. It extended over approximately 13 by 19 m. Three doors gave access from the basilica and should underline the importance of the building. Around 200 council members are said to have found space in the curia. In addition to the remains of columns, remnants of murals have been discovered.

The Churches

The Basilica of the Bishop

Basilika

Originally a building in which law was spoken or trade was carried out. The Christian church adopted the term for its sacred buildings. Usually, they had three aisles, a high central nave and two adjacent lower side naves.

Today the name "basilica" is only given to particularly important churches.

At its last heyday, when the church appointed Dion to a bishopric, the bishop's basilica was built in two stages of construction during the 4th and 5th centuries. It was a three-nave building with a narthex. Remains of the walls are painted, the floor was covered with mosaic. A smaller building, west of the church, served as a baptistery (Babtisterium). An earthquake at the end of the 4th century destroyed the building. They used the existing foundations to build another church above it. Only the

new apse extended the basilica five meters to the east. The baptistery has now been integrated into the church, the baptismal font had the shape of a Maltese cross.

For a later detour: The cemetery church is located south of the city walls, just north of the entrance area.

The Cemetery Church

In the middle of the cemetery, a three-nave church was built at the beginning of the 5th century. The nave had a mosaic floor. Narthex and aisles were covered with clay plates. Under the floor of the church, graves were discovered. In 1990 two vaults which were decorated with birds and plant friezes were excavated. A room was later added to the building, in which the church treasury was kept. Also, a wine-press and a granary were found there.

After visiting the basilica, turn east and walk to an area where, in addition to public buildings, the remains of private houses and other thermal baths can be seen. Because of their large numbers, only the most important of them are described here. For more information, please see the information boards. Explore the rest of the excavations as you please.

The Houses

As part of the excavations, private houses have been exposed in various areas of the city. Almost all have mosaic floors. The names of the former owners occasionally could be obtained from surviving parts of a mosaic or stamped lead pipes used for water supply. Furthermore, statues, columns, remains of furniture, busts and other finds were discovered. In summer 1992 parts of a water organ (Hydraulis) were excavated in the estate opposite the villa of Dionysus.

The Polygonal Building

At the crossroads of the main street and the street leading to the west gate lie the remains of the polygonal building. It included about 1400 m² and probably served as a market hall. The complex is square and was built around a dodecagonal square. The area was surrounded by an arcade connecting the rooms of the building. The entrance was on the south side. A floor mosaic shows two struggling athletes and two slaves with rucksacks.

Villa of Dionysus

In 1982, archaeologists began exploring the area east of the main road. They brought to light the remains of an elongated building with shops and a bathing facility in the southwestern area. The excavations showed statues of Dionysus, a Nike and parts of other sculptures and statuettes. In June 1987, a large mosaic was found in the spacious atrium, which later received the name Dionysus mosaic due to the depiction of the epiphany of Dionysus. Obviously, the atrium served as the dining room of the estate. Among other finds in this room were sculptures of four seated philosophers, the statuette of a satyr and a statuette of Hercules. In 1989, four more rooms of the villa were uncovered. While the first two showed few interesting finds, in the third four clay storage jars were exposed. In the last room was a broken mosaic, which in its center represents the head of a Medusa. Furthermore, a statue of Hercules with a club, bow, arrows and lion skin, as well as the statue of a deer were brought to light. Two years before, the head of the deer and the hand of Hercules, which held the bow, were found in the atrium.

The Praetorium

Near the villa of Dionysus, on the main road, are the remains of the praetorium. The building was used as a hostel for officials and emissaries as well as to accommodate ordinary travelers (in the taberna). A locally found Latin inscription called the property as praetorium with two Tabernae. The entrance was on the south side. In the eastern part of the complex, there were five bedrooms and a luxurious dining room, the Triclinium. The Tabernae consisted of two larger rooms in the western wing. Here the archaeologists found earthen storage vessels and some lamps. Between praetorium and the Tabernae was probably a barn. Public toilets were accessible to both the guests and the inhabitants of the town. An underground plumbing system, consisting of flowing water, served the need for hygiene by removing wastewater.

The Water Supply

Ancient city of Dion drew its water from the river Helikon (Ourlias), about five km away. From there, water pipes were laid to the city, mostly underground, partly built as an aqueduct. Part of the aqueduct was discovered in a ravine northwest of the city. Within Dion, the water was collected in a central cistern from which it was distributed to other cisterns or wells. As a material for the water pipes, both clay and lead were used. The central cistern was built in the 2nd century AD from stone and clay bricks. Two wells, which took over the supply of the households and the baths, lay in the northeast and southeast of

the urban area. A third was replaced by a smaller cistern after the destruction of the main cistern by an earthquake.

The Necropolises

In the Hellenistic and Roman times, the cemeteries were outside the city walls. They extend in a westerly and northerly direction, their entire extension is unknown. While wealthy citizens and persons of public life have been buried in monumental tombs, simple people have been buried more modestly. The oldest example of a grave stele dates back to the 5th century BC and depicts a girl. After the Romans conquered Dion, coffins and grave steles were often inscribed in Greek and Latin.

The Macedonian Tombs

During the first excavations, a vaulted Macedonian tomb with a Doric façade from the 4th century BC was found under a low burial mound. The marble doors were broken, the burial chamber had been robbed by grave robbers. The remains of a couch depicting a battle of cavalrymen and parts of a frieze depicting lions were found.

In 1955 archaeologists found a second grave. It contained a stone couch (kline), the floor was layed out with colored pebbles.

One year later, a third grave followed. In addition to a stony kline archaeologists found three stone pedestals.

The fourth grave was discovered in 1979. Behind marble doors hid a couch with ivory inlays.

The last grave to date was uncovered in 1988. Among the finds was a silver tetradrachm with the image of Alexander the Great and a golden Charon‘s obol in which the name “Ephigenis” is imprinted.

As funerary objects, the deceased received gold jewelry, gold and silver coins, glass bottles, which possibly contained perfume, and glass jars. Some grave steles, as well as the grave offerings, are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum.

Archaeological Museum

Most important

- Finds from Dion and the surrounding area are exhibited.
- The famous Hydraulis of Dion is on display.
- Attached to the museum are a laboratory, a workshop and a storehouse.
- In a separate building, the archaeotheke, the Dionysus mosaic can be seen.
- For further information see the book „DION - The Archaeological Site and the Museum“ written by Prof. Dimitrios Pandermalis. ISBN: 960-500-080-6
- Phone: 23510-45057
- **Map and navigation**

Archaeological Museum

In order to adequately present the findings of the Dion archaeological site, the Archaeological Museum was built in 1983. It is located on the southern edge of the village, 500 m west of the Archaeological Park. Photography without a flash is permitted.

Due to the changing rulers and religions of the Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, as well as from the Byzantine period, artifacts from all these times are exhibited in the museum. In addition to the sanctuaries of the Greeks, the Romans established the Isis cult, which, like the other cults, was replaced by Christianity.
The building consists of three floors. On the ground floor are mainly statues, statuettes, written evidence and ecclesiastical finds. On the upper floor, the finds from the houses of the city and from the surroundings of Dion are shown. The basement houses coins, tools and models of antique equipment. Behind the museum, on the south side, larger artifacts can be seen in the open air.
The tour through the museum should be started with a visit of the small cinema on the ground floor. In a short film, Professor Pandermalis informs about ancient Dion, the excavations and the museum.

Now that you know the essential information about the excavation site, you will see some exhibits with different eyes. There is no recommended order for the tour at the museum. If you are wondering about the two pictures at the entrance to the cinema - they are a gift from the Louvre in Paris. As a thank for providing some of the museum's exhibits for a temporary exhibition at the Louvre.

Ground Floor:

Main Thermal Baths

Among the remnants of the Great thermal baths were several statues depicting Asclepius, the healer and protector of the body, and members of his family. Besides his wife, Epione statues of his sons Podaleirios and Machaon and his daughters Hygeia, Panakeia, Akeso and Iaso are also displayed.

The Sanctuary of Demeter

It is the oldest excavated sanctuary in Dion dating from the 6th century BC. The goddess was worshiped in Dion until the 4th century AD, for almost 1000 years. On the site cult objects, clay figures, lamps, vases and coins were found. The museum displays parts of sculptures from different eras. Such artifacts include a head of Demeter from the 4th century BC and the head of Aphrodite from the 1st century AD. A stone altar block served as a storage place for the meat offering during the sacrificial ceremony for the goddess Aphrodite. The Roman copy of a statue of Artemis (original from the 4th century BC) was found in the river Vaphyras and is displayed under the name "Artemis Vaphyria".

The Sanctuary of Isis

The cult of Isis from Egypt, introduced by the Romans, began to supplant the cult of Artemis. There were statues of Isis Tyche, Isis Lochia, the goddess of birth, and Aphrodite Hypolympiada. The sculpture of Julia Phrougiane Alexandra, of which a copy can be seen in the Archaeological Park, was still upright on its pedestal when discovered. Furthermore, statuettes of Harpokrates, the companion of Isis, and marble tablets showing footprints of different sizes (possibly of men and women) are exhibited. One of these is rotatable. On the back one can see the artist's first, failed, attempt. Since marble was valuable, he completed his work on the reverse side of the board. In addition to the depictions of persons, the upper part of a well was found as well as cult objects such as a millstone, a fruit press and a small altar.

The Sanctuary of Zeus Olympios

Here a marble head of the river god Vaphyras and stone tablets are shown. Among them are letters from King Philip V to his officials and the citizens of Dion.

The Sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos

Exhibited are the statues of Zeus and Hera sitting on their thrones as well as various stone statuettes of eagles.

Further Exhibits

A find from the house Leda is a fully preserved marble table, which is supported by an artistically interpreted lion statue. Tables of this type were used to present valuable items. Displayed in showcases are funerary objects from the ancient tombs. Shown are jewelry, glass and clay vessels, coins and other exhibits. A marble relief, part of a Roman sarcophagus, represents two opposing sphinxes. From early Christian times stone reliefs, tombstones, crucifixes and objects of the liturgy can be seen.

Upper Floor:

The areas upstairs are used for permanent exhibitions and for temporary exhibitions.
On display are artifacts from Dion and the surrounding area.

The Mosaic production

The creation of large-scale works was carried out commercially. There was a draftsman who planned the work of art according to the client's wishes and drew it on the prepared surface. Workers broke and hammered the required mosaic stones into the desired shape. Artisans then glued them to the sketched area and sealed the joints.

From the villa of Dionysus comes a mosaic representing the head of Medusa. The mosaic stones (tesserae) are made of colored marble, there are also some glass tesserae worked in.

The statuettes of four philosophers also come from the villa of Dionysus.

On the fragments of a grave stele a girl is depicted. It was made in the beginning of the second half of the 5th century BC. Only a few artifacts from this period have been found in Macedonia so far. The type of marble used suggests an ionic origin, the style is reminiscent of grave stelae found on Greek islands.

Hydraulis of Dion

The water organ of Dion, also called Hydraulis of Dion, is the oldest ever discovered Hydraulis musical instrument and is considered the oldest keyboard instrument in the world. The organ was produced in the 1st century BC.

The instrument

Ancient Water Organ

With water organs, the ancestors of the organ-like instruments, constant air pressure is maintained by an air container, which is located in a water tank. With the help of a keyboard, a valve is opened, whereby air flows into the organ pipe and generates a sound. Each organ pipe generates a certain pitch.

The hydraulis of Dion is 120 cm high and 70 cm wide. 24 pipes with a diameter of 18 mm and 16 narrow pipes with a diameter of about 10 mm are arranged in two rows. They were decorated with silver rings. The body of the organ was decorated with silver stripes and multicolored, rectangular glass ornaments.

Excavation History

At the beginning of the 1980s, the area east of the main road of ancient Dion was drained. The neighboring river had permanently flooded parts of the archaeological site. Here in the summer of 1992 planned excavations were conducted under the direction of Professor Dimitrios Pandermalis. The foundations of a building were uncovered opposite the villa of Dionysus. On the morning of the 19th of August 1992, archaeologists discovered pieces of small copper tubes. Fur-

thermore, they found a larger, rectangular copper plate. The individual finds were partially connected by the compacted soil. After recognizing the significance of the find, the earth was widely removed and the find was sent, for further processing, to the workshops. After cleaning the items, the archaeologists realized that it was a musical instrument, a water organ.

Replica

With the support of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sport and the help of Prof. Pandermalis, a reconstruction of the water organ was begun at the European Cultural Center of Delphi in 1995. It was built using ancient records and the original excavated in Dion. In 1999 the instrument was completed.

Exhibits from the Surrounding Area

Excavations of Pydna

Near Makrygialos, the skull of a girl was found during the excavations from 1994 to 1996, in the tomb 108. She had died young, she did not have a fully developed dentition. For her funeral, she was decorated with a bronze diadem. Besides that, she wore a bronze bracelet, three finger rings, a necklace and metal fittings on her belt. Archaeologists gave her the name "sleeping girl". Tiaras of this kind were very rare as gifts, they underline the rank of the deceased. Among the grave offerings were three Mycenaean pottery vessels.

Tombstones and other finds from the necropolises of Pydna are shown.

Finds from Ritini

In a showcase bronze figures from the rural environment of Ritini are shown. In addition to animal figures, a Kuros and statuettes of Hercules can be seen.

Basement:

Coins

Many diverse coins, found in Dion during the excavations, are exhibited. Among them, a gold stater, which was issued by Philip II and was at his time the most important currency in Europe. The silver

King Alexander I

Reign from ~ 498 B.C. to 454 B.C.

Alexander I took over the throne from his father Amynthas II. Macedonia was a vassal state of the Persian Empire at that time, Alexander acted as an ambassador for the Persians. After the sea battle of Salamis (480 BC), lost by the Persians, he negotiated a peace treaty with the Greek victors. However, his function did not prevent him from warning the Greeks of an attack by the Persians a year later. The Greeks and Spartans won the following Battle of Plataeae, the Persians withdrew to Asia Minor and Macedonia regained its independence.

quarter-drachma that Alexander the Great had minted was spread all over the east of his empire. An exhibition board shows on a timeline the minted coins in conjunction with the ruling kings of Macedonia. The predominant coin-making material was silver. Mainly heavy, valuable silver coins were minted from which some were discovered in Mesopotamia, Egypt or the Levant. But also smaller coins, intended for the payment of the transactions of daily life, were in use.

In addition to commonly used coins for payment, archaeologists also found rarer coins. On these gods such as Zeus, Athena or Artemis are depicted.

In northern Greece, money was introduced quite early as a medium of exchange. Due to precious metal mines on the peninsula of Chalkidiki and in the Pangaion mountains, there were enough resources for minting coins. In the first half of the 5th century BC, King Alexander I introduced coinage in the Macedonian kingdom. The main reason for this step was the obligation to pay taxes to the Persians. By expanding his empire to the east, he brought more mines in the vicinity of Philippi under his control. The yield from these mines alone was estimated at a silver talent (about 26 kg) per day.

A special coin category is the so-called ghost coin, also called Charon's obol. They are made of gold leaf and were put into the mouth of the deceased to pay for the ferryman Charon. He brought, according to Greek mythology, the deceased across the river Styx to the realm of Hades.

Tools and everyday Items

Shown are building materials such as floor tiles, roof tiles, bricks, clay- and lead water pipes. Earthen household vessels containing oil or wine were produced using potter's wheels and fired in kilns. There are a variety of tools and chisels on display, of which one can directly see the effects of working on marble pieces. A small loom illustrates how fabrics were made. A mortar and its pestle are made of stone.

A plough from the 3rd century AD should also be mentioned. It was excavated south of the Hellenistic theater. A hand scale from the 1st century BC was very finely adjustable. From the same century comes a speculum, an instrument used for gynecological examinations. A model of the hypocaust system shows how the thermal baths of the city were heated.

The museum's most impressive exhibit, the Dionysus Mosaic, can be found in a separate building, the Archaeotheke.

The Archaeotheke

This building, located west of the museum exhibits the Dionysus mosaic. From a gallery, it can be viewed from all sides. Also, findings from excavations at Dion and the surrounding area are presented to visitors in showcases. A video informs about the segmentation of the mosaic at its place of discovery, the transport to the archaeotheke and the subsequent restoration. The building was built especially for the exhibition of this mosaic.

The Archaeotheke

Dionysus Mosaic

Watch the film about the restoration of the mosaic. It's in Greek language with English subtitles.

Description

The Dionysus mosaic is the largest existing mosaic ever found during excavations in Dion. It shows the epiphany of the triumphant Dionysus. In the center of the large-scale mosaic, Dionysus is depicted in a carriage. Next to him is a mature Silenus, who is more likely to be seen as the helper of the god than the charioteer. Two Panthers pull the wagon, two centaurs hold their reins. One of the two centaurs carries a jar (crater) that probably contains wine. The other centaur has a closed vessel on his shoulder, probably containing the sacred symbols of the Dionysus cult. The light background highlights the figure of Dionysus. The artists (probably several people worked on the artwork at the same time) used tesserae of different sizes and several dozen shades of color to illustrate details plastically. They gave their work the character of a painting. Probably a picture from Hellenistic times served as inspiration.
The masks below and above the central mosaic are of high quality as well.
The artwork was created at the beginning of the 3rd century AD. The main part of the mosaic, the epiphany of Dionysus, measures 150 by 220 cm. The entire mosaic has a floor area of around 100 m².

Dionysus

The god of wine and madness is a son of Zeus. Since his mother, Semele, was mortal, he was the only god with a human parent. Innumerable myths entwine themselves around his person.

It is said, that he have hidden from the world among the muses, unwilling to return.

The drunken Dionysus leans on a satyr

Excavation

In the summer of 1987, archaeologists found under a layer of soil the most significant mosaic of the extensive excavation site. It was almost completely preserved by the protection of the covering earth.

Of course, this valuable find should be preserved. Since it should be presented to the public, a footbridge was built on which visitors could walk around it and study the artwork from all sides. A roof construction was erected. For more than 20 years, the mosaic was protected from people, rain and sun under the roof construction. Although it helped against the sun's rays, it was powerless against ground-

water and general decay. From year to year, the condition got worse. Some pieces of mosaic broke away from the ground, plants grew in the cracks. It was only a matter of time before this work, largely intact over two millennia, would be destroyed.

Restoration

It was decided to create a separate building for this artwork. After its completion, the mosaic had to be removed from the villa of Dionysus. In autumn 2015, conservators, archaeologists and workers started this project. In order to divide the mosaic into several parts, the position and shape of the individual mosaic stones were first marked on the intended dividing lines. Then these tesserae were removed. Special glue and textile sheets were applied to fix the remaining stones in their place. This was followed by the division of the mosaic into several transportable plates. After that, these plates had to be separated from the subfloor. Beginning at the edge, holes were drilled in the ground beneath the object using long drills. With flat steel blades, which were inserted in the holes, experts detached the mosaic from the underground. Then it was gently raised to drive a matching steel plate underneath. The surface was covered with wooden plates by the helpers. Several belt tensioners helped to fix the two plates against each other so that no movement was possible during transport. The pieces, weighing up to 500 kg, reached the trailer via a ramp and were transported to the archaeotheke. In the meantime, a precise image of the entire mosaic had been spread out there on the floor. It has been manufactured on a scale of 1:1 to show the restorers the space for each individual item. In order to stabilize the mosaic stones, the restorers removed the antique backing layer under the mosaic and replaced it with fresh mortar. Last but not least, steam dissolved the special glue between the mosaic stones and the fabric. The resulting segments were placed in their position and reunited to form the whole artwork again.

Leptokarya

At the foot of Mount Olympus, right on the sea, is the village Leptokarya. More precisely: the new Leptokarya. Until the 1950s, the inhabitants of the place lived about four kilometers further west in the mountains. When the earth began to slide and houses became uninhabitable, the residents moved to the sea. The new village was built like a chessboard, each family received a plot of approx. 400 m².

Miles of Beaches

Old House in the Old Village

The main source of income for the people is tourism. There are plenty of hotels and taverns on the several kilometers long beach. In the second and third row one can also find cheap guest houses. All in all, everything from private accommodation to a 4 star hotel is offered that the tourist needs for a relaxing holiday.

An attraction is the weekly market on Tuesdays, where one can buy clothes and products from the region.

General sights

- The ancient Leptokarya (Map and navigation)
- The market in the center of the village (on Tuesday from 8:00 to ca. 1:00)
- The magnetic field (Geomagnetic anomaly) (Map and navigation)

Fresh Vegetables

The magnetic field

The Magnetic Field

You can find it by following the road to Karya from Leptokarya; a wooden cross on the side of the road marks the spot. Cars move uphill as if by magic. Water bottles roll in the same direction. What is the cause of this? A whim of nature or an optical illusion. Find out for yourself.

Leivithra, the World of Orpheus and the Muses

Most important

- Linking the history of the ancient city with Greek mythology
- Orpheus is said to have lived here and also been buried, habitat of the Muses
- Staging area of the Roman troops before the devastating battle against the Macedonian army
- Video about the acropolis of ancient Leivithra
- Video about Leivithra Park
- Not fully explored yet, excavations are still ongoing
- Phone: 23520-33884
- Coordinates Leivithra park: **Map and navigation**
- Acropolis: **Map and navigation**

Leivithra Park and Acropolis

Leivithra is located at the eastern foot of Mount Olympus. It is about four kilometers from the coast and four kilometers southwest of the village of Leptokarya. Leivithra is associated with both the acropolis, which reaches a height of 130 m, as well as the plain eastwards. It is bordered by the Griva and Kavourolaka rivers, which flow into the Ziliana river. Nearby archaeologists found graves from at least Mycenean times with rich grave offerings. The archaeological site covers an area of 150 hectares, the fortified acropolis takes up 1.5 hectares.

*Before entering Leivithra Park, let your gaze wander over the plain from the mountains to the castle of Platamonas. (**Please keep your distance from the steep wall, which leads 40 m to the deep!**) In 169 BC the Romans set up their camp between ancient Heraklion (castle hill of Platamonas) and Leivithra. Coming from Thessaly, they started their campaign from here, which ended in the conquest of Macedonia. If you want to visit the Acropolis, you'll cross an old plane tree forest. Look closely and you will see figures in the trees. You may find Orpheus, the muses, or even the gods of Olympus.*

Exhibition in the Main Building of Leivithra Park

History

The name Leivithra was once the name for canals. The recent excavations confirm that the acropolis had been inhabited from the 8th to the 1st century BC. The upstream plain at least since the Bronze Age. Around 169 BC Roman troops set up their army camp between the ancient Heraklion (castle hill of Platamonas) and Leivithra. Coming from Thessaly, they began their campaign from here, which ended in the conquest of Macedonia.Finds from the time of the last settlement date from the years around 100 BC. What ultimately caused the destruction of the settlement is still unclear. According to the latest findings, it should have been an earthquake, possibly in conjunction with a subsequent flooding.

Excavations

So far, the acropolis has only randomly been excavated, the vast majority is still untouched. Silver coins were found mainly of Macedonian origin, but also from other parts of Greece. Furthermore, smaller clay pots, large clay storage containers and fragments of metalwork, arrowheads and spearheads. A lead weight bears the inscription ΛΕΙΒΗ (LEIVI).

A Dzi bead, an elongated stone pearl, found its way to Leivithra from distant Tibet. It was made of agate, is 40 mm long and has a diameter of 12 mm. He was found in a pile of stones on the acropolis. Since there was no trade relationship between the countries, it is believed that a veteran from the army of Alexander the Great brought him as a souvenir

The acropolis was surrounded by a defensive wall. While the wall of the north side consists of field stones, big cuboids are stacked on the southwest side. On the west side, the foundations of a tower were uncovered. Forms of other buildings vary, they were built irregularly on narrow streets. The foundations have remarkable depth and suggest a multi-level construction. The upper walls were made of bricks, the roofs were covered with roof tiles in the laconic style. In the floor of the dwelling houses often clay storage pits (Pithoi) were embedded.

In the neighborhood (Old Leptokarya and Skotina) graves from the Mycenaean and Iron Age were discovered. They contained weapons, tools and clay vessels as grave offerings. The finds are stored in the Archaeological Museum, Dion.

Leivithra Park

Since the park next to the Olympus is also dedicated to Orpheus, the paths of the park are laid out in the form of his musical instrument, a lyre.

The park is divided into three areas:

- An educational and recreational area
- Plants and myths
- Forest and environment

The route starts on the floor plan of a house that dates back to the Mycenaean period. It was discovered during construction works near Platamonas.

It is followed by an oval-shaped building, built in the prevailing style of the 8th century BC. The dimensions of the floor plan were modeled on a house excavated in Krania, at the foot of the castle of Platamonas. The foundations are made of stone, the basic structure of wood. The walls were made of a mixture of clay and straw, in the outer layer goat hair was worked in, the roof is covered with reeds.

The main building of the park is modeled after a nearby excavated winery. Within the building, the evolution of the region from the Neolithic Age to the destruction of Leivithra is depicted.

On the west side, exhibition boards in four pavilions inform about the life and work of Orpheus and the Muses. In the immediate vicinity is an open-air theater, which was created in the form of an ancient amphitheater. Behind the theater, a staircase leads to the opposite archaeological site.

Along the paths, you can see plants that play a role in Greek mythology and whose meaning is explained on information boards. At the southwestern edge of the park is a small forest trail.

Exhibition

Display boards, photographs and maps inform the visitor about Leivithra, the nearby archaeological sites such as Komboloi or Tria Platania and the archaeological finds of the area. On display are replicas of tools and utensils of daily use. Modern tablets provide videos of the Leivithra Park and the acropolis. In a small cinema, archaeologists give insights into topics such as: “The construction of ancient Greek theater” or “The coinage in ancient Greece” on certain occasions.

Mythology

Orpheus

He was the son of the Muse Kalliope and the Thracian King Oiagros (other sources name the god Apollo as his father) and was born in a cave between Pimpleia (near today's Litochoro) and Leivithra. Following his musical predisposition, he developed into a singer. His lyre is said to have been given to him by the god Apollo. The legend tells that his music even made animals and trees dance.

Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus was one of the Argonauts. After returning from the search for the Golden Fleece, he fell in love with the nymph Eurydice. When she died of a snake bite, he went to the underworld and persuaded Hades to be allowed to lead Eurydice back to the living again. Hades agreed, on condition that Orpheus did not turn to Eurydice during his ascent from the underworld. Orpheus did not follow this condition and so Eurydice was doomed to return to Hades.

In mourning, Orpheus withdrew and shied away from women. It was said that he has been killed by enraged women and later buried in Leivithra. According to the legend, the town would be destroyed by

a boar as soon as his bones see the sun. A careless shepherd shoved the closing plate off Orpheus's grave and the sun shone on his bones. Then the river Sys (the ancient Greek name for wild boar, biological name: *Sus* Scrofa) swelled strongly and a flood destroyed the place.

The Muses

The Muses are daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus. They lived near springs and were devoted to literature, science, and the fine arts. Hesiod wrote, that they pleased Zeus with their singing. They saw the past, the present and the future. The nine Muses and their tasks are:

- Calliope, poetry and science. She is the Prima inter pares and the mother of Orpheus. She is represented with the lyre and a book.
- Clio, her most important task is the preservation of history. Illustrated with a papyrus scroll.
- Erato, from her comes the erotic poetry, she is the guardian of marriage. Also in her hands is a lyre.
- Euterpe, a musical Muse, but also a guardian of rhetoric. You can recognize her with a double flute.
- Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy. She wears a sword and a wreath of wine leaves.
- Polyhymnia, the sacred hymns and the search for knowledge is her aspiration. She is shown in deep meditation.
- Terpsichore, Muse of dance, song and lyre. She is depicted with the lyre and the cymbal.
- Thalia, the antipole to Melpomene - she is the Muse of the comedy and wears a mask and a wreath of ivy.
- Urania, the Muse of astronomy and astrology. Her hallmark is the heavenly sphere.

Sometimes the Muses are depicted with different symbols.
In Greek mythology, the individual Muses had no specific tasks, they were assigned to them later by the Romans.

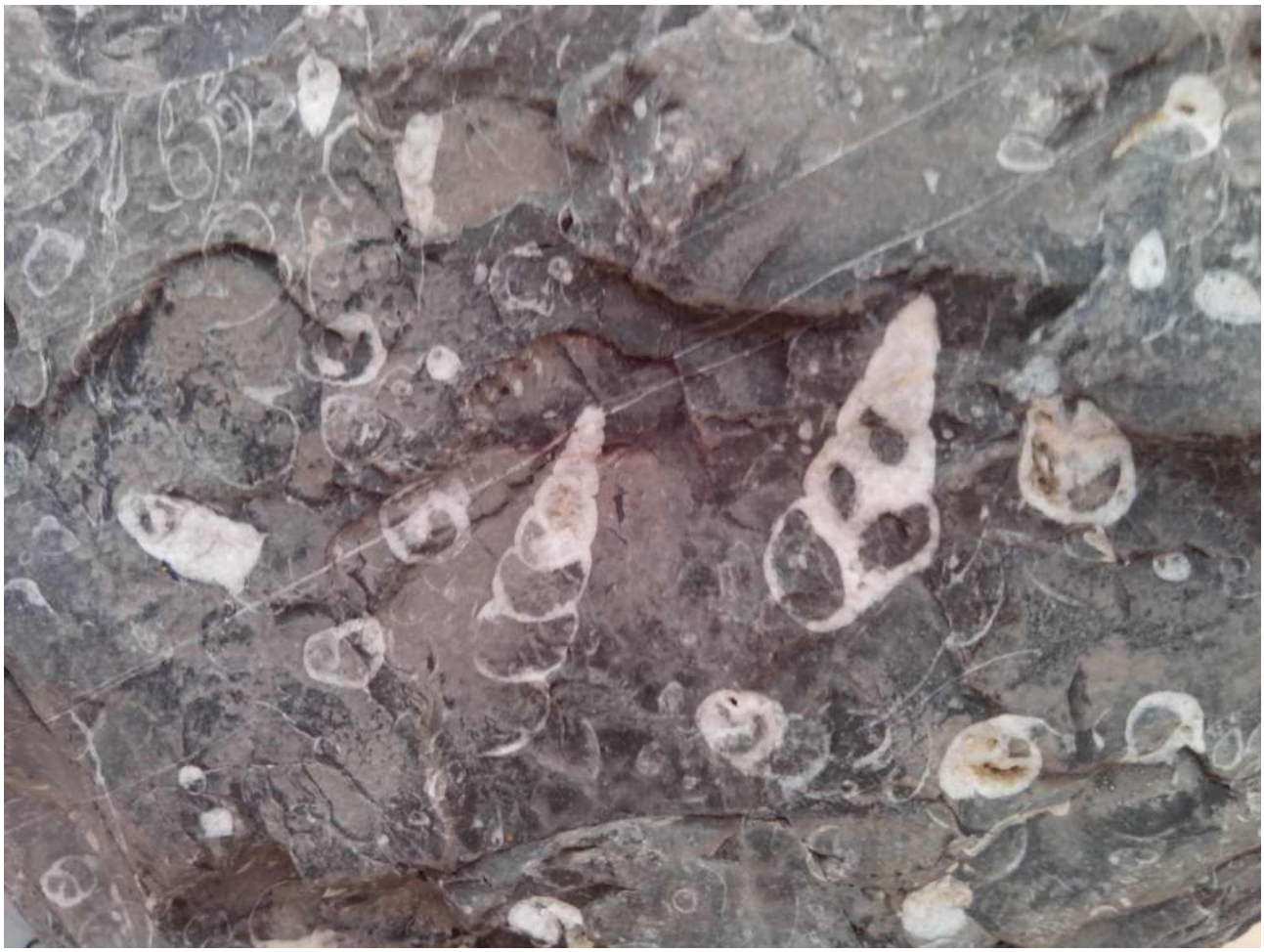
The Muses gave us the words museum and music.

Olympus Geological History Museum

Most important

- Personal guiding
- Clear representation of the geological structure of the mountain
- Exhibition of all kinds of stones occurring on Mount Olympus
- Fossils
- Phone: 23520- 31901
- **Map and navigation**

The museum, which is located at 32 Georgaki Olympiou street in Leptokarya, presents in several rooms rocks, minerals and fossils of Mount Olympus and the wider area. It was established with the help of the Department of Geology of Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.



Some Fossils

Exhibition

One goal is to show the visitor how geology and the Greek history are interconnected. Information boards explain the geological development of Greece. A small scale plaster model of Mount Olympus with different colours, representing different kinds of rocks at different localities on the mountain, give further insight into the complex geological past that formed this 2918,8 m high magnificent mountain. The occurring rocks are exhibited in showcases.

Minerals in a Cabinet

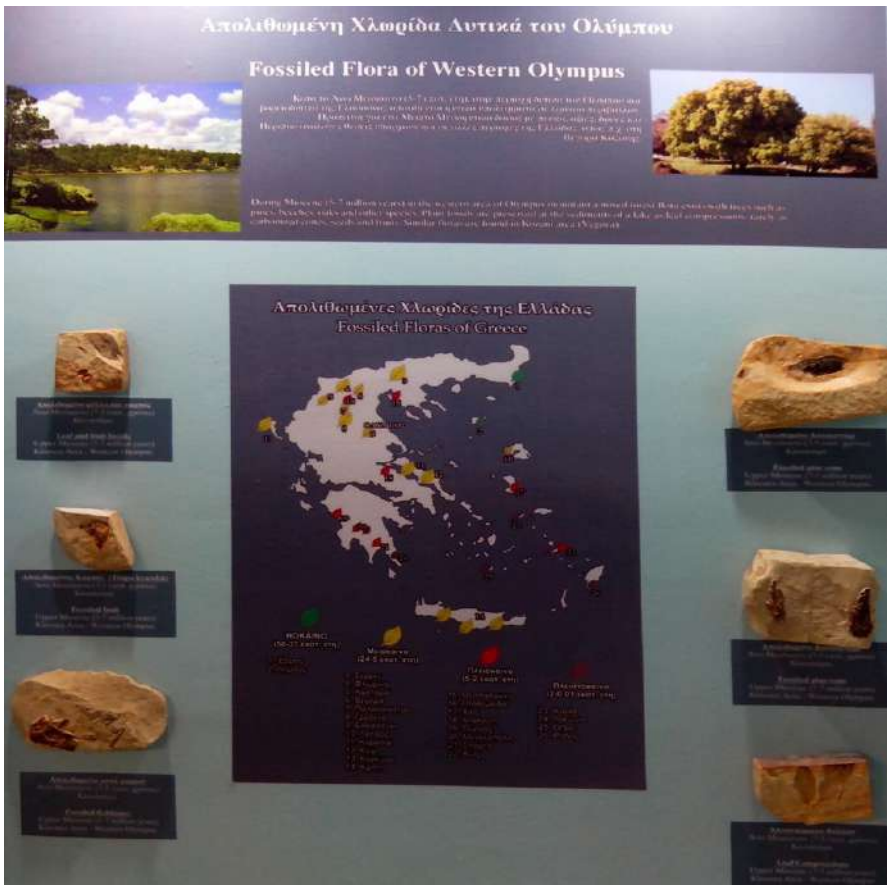
Due to the shifting of the continental plates, the peaks of the mountains are still pushed up by one to four millimeters per year. So it happens, that in an altitude of about 1000 to 1500 m fossilized marine shells can been found. A hitherto unique find was an ammonite, which was found at about 1100 m altitude. Other evidence that parts of the mountain used to be below sea level is limestone, which was drilled by mussels (Lithophagae) or limestone, which includes seaworms.

Olympus is a so-called tectonic window. This means that erosion and faulting have exposed old rock layers that are normally hidden. This fact ensures that geologists from all over the world arrive for research purposes.

More panels explain that the mountain landscape got its present appearance only after the Wurm ice age. There were glaciers on Olympus which moved down from the peaks. They moved rocks with them and because of the friction these stones have a characteristic form. They are round on their top but flat at the bottom.

A showcase is dedicated to the subject of petrification. Exhibited are petrified plants, sea-shells and animals. So far, only a few, smaller, caves have been discovered. Some of them contain ice, which does not melt even in summer.

The latest find (2019) on Olympus is a rock with stromatolites from the Jurassic period (208 – 145 million years ago). On the ground floor, in the museum there is an exhibition artwork which shows the life of Alexander the Great. It should also be noted that visitors to the museum at night have the opportunity to observe the moon and planets through a telescope.



Showcase with Examples of Petrified Plants

Monastery Kanalon

Most important

- Convent
- Founded already by Byzantine times, the oldest inhabited monastery in Olympus
- Notable location on the edge of a gorge
- Phone: 24930-91250
- **Map and navigation**

The monastery is located in the northeast of Thessaly, at the road connecting Leptokarya with Karya, above the Ziliana River. The name refers to four nearby torrents known as Kanalia (canals). As the only monastery mentioned in this book it is part of the diocese of Elassona.

Monastery Kanalon

History

In 1055 the monks Damianos and Joakim chose this place to build a monastery and dedicate it to the Holy Mother of God. It is located on an altitude of 820 meters and is surrounded by forest. Unfortunately, there are no records of the first centuries of existence. An inscription from 1638 is the oldest surviving reference that exists. The frescoes in the chapel come from this period. The facility then also consisted of the refectory and the church. In 1681 a chapel dedicated to Saint Dimitrios was added. The west wing, in which the cells of the residents are today, was built later.

Courtyard of the Monastery

The heyday of the monastery was in the 17th century. In the 19th century, it had to endure hard times. Thieves attacked and plundered it. In 1881 the church collapsed for unknown reasons. A first attempt by the architect Stamatis to rebuild it failed. The building collapsed again. Two years later, it was rebuilt on the old foundations according to the plans of the architect Efthymios Milios. In 1930, the last monks left the monastery. It was abandoned and began to disintegrate. Only since 2001 it was it again occupied, this time by nuns.

Palaios Pandeleimonas, one of the most Beautiful Villages of Greece

The mountain village is only a few kilometers distant from the sea. A curvy road winds up Mount Olympus and often offers beautiful views of the sea and the mountains. Please park your car outside the village, the entrance is only allowed for residents.

Palaios (Old) Pandeleimonas

The village is said to have existed since the Middle Ages, but was abandoned by most of its residents in the mid-20th century. They moved near the coast and gave the new village the name Neos (New) Pandeleimonas. From the 1980s, the reconstruction of old houses and the construction of many houses in the old village began. They must be built in the traditional style by law. However, this does not mean that concrete and bricks are not used. The new buildings only have to correspond externally to the originals. That means the masonry is covered with field stones,

One of the many Taverns

the installation of wooden windows is a must. Unfortunately, the old ruins are gradually being removed. Their broken roofs and the walls overgrown with plants have a special charm.

Decaying House

Explore the winding, cobbled alleyways, wearing solid shoes is an advantage. The village is quite small, you really can't get lost. The residents of Palaios Pandeleimonas do their best to lovingly decorate their surroundings. Enjoy the details hidden behind every corner. In addition to the usual souvenirs, some souvenir shops also offer home-made and handmade goods.

In the village there is plenty of accommodations, many of taverns and some cafes. Most of the restaurants are located around the central square, the Platia. The dishes on offer differ from those served on the coast. The food is more rustic, grilled, stews and occasionally game are on the menu. If you want to drink a schnapps, don't order an ouzo, but a Tsipouro. This is the hard liquor that the locals prefer over ouzo.

Palaios Panteleimonas in Autumn

Most important

- An icon of the saint is surrounded by devotional objects
- Wooden, carved, pulpit
- **Map and navigation**

Church Agios Pandeleimon

Church Agios Pandeleimon

The church is located in the center of the village and borders the central square (Platia) on its north side. The square is towered over by two mighty elms and serves as a venue for festivals and dance events in summer.

History

The church was built in 1914 on the site of another church that dates from 1850.

Inside the Church

The building

The masonry consists of field stones. The corners and the edging of the windows are delimited with bricks. The roof is covered with tiles and is towered over by three mighty domes. The church has three naves, no narthex, but an open but covered vestibule.

Icon Depicting the Saint

The roof is supported by pillars, which are connected to each other with flat iron and spanned by round arches. While the side aisles have a straight roof, that of the main aisle is arched and is towered by the central dome with a painting of the Pantocrator, Christ as ruler of the world. The 12 windows embedded in the dome consist partly of colored glass. In the western part, a gallery extends over all three naves.

The interior walls are plastered, painted white and decorated with only a few paintings, the floor is uniformly tiled.

The iconostasis shows in the lower row icons of saints, as usual in orthodox churches. The icon to the left of the portrait of the Blessed-Virgin with her child is framed by countless devotional objects. In this way, the faithful ask for the help of Saint Pandeleimon. He was

a doctor and it is said that he had many times healed sick people in a miraculous way. Therefore, those who seeking help for someone sick attach an object, carried by that person, to the icon and hope that the healing powers of the saint will be transferred to the patient.

The top row of the iconostasis shows scenes from the life of Christ. In the gable an icon depicting the Last Supper can be seen.

The carved and painted pulpit and an icon painted on leather on the back of the bishop's throne are worth seeing.

Some of the Devotional Objects

Litochoro

History

The settlement of sailors in today's Litochoro began in 380 AD by the Byzantine emperor Theodosius. He sent people from Greek islands to Mount Olympus to settle there.

Unfortunately, the exact origin of most people is unknown, only the island of Limnos is considered sure of the origin. Since most of the islanders were sailors, it was natural that they would practice their profession in the new home.

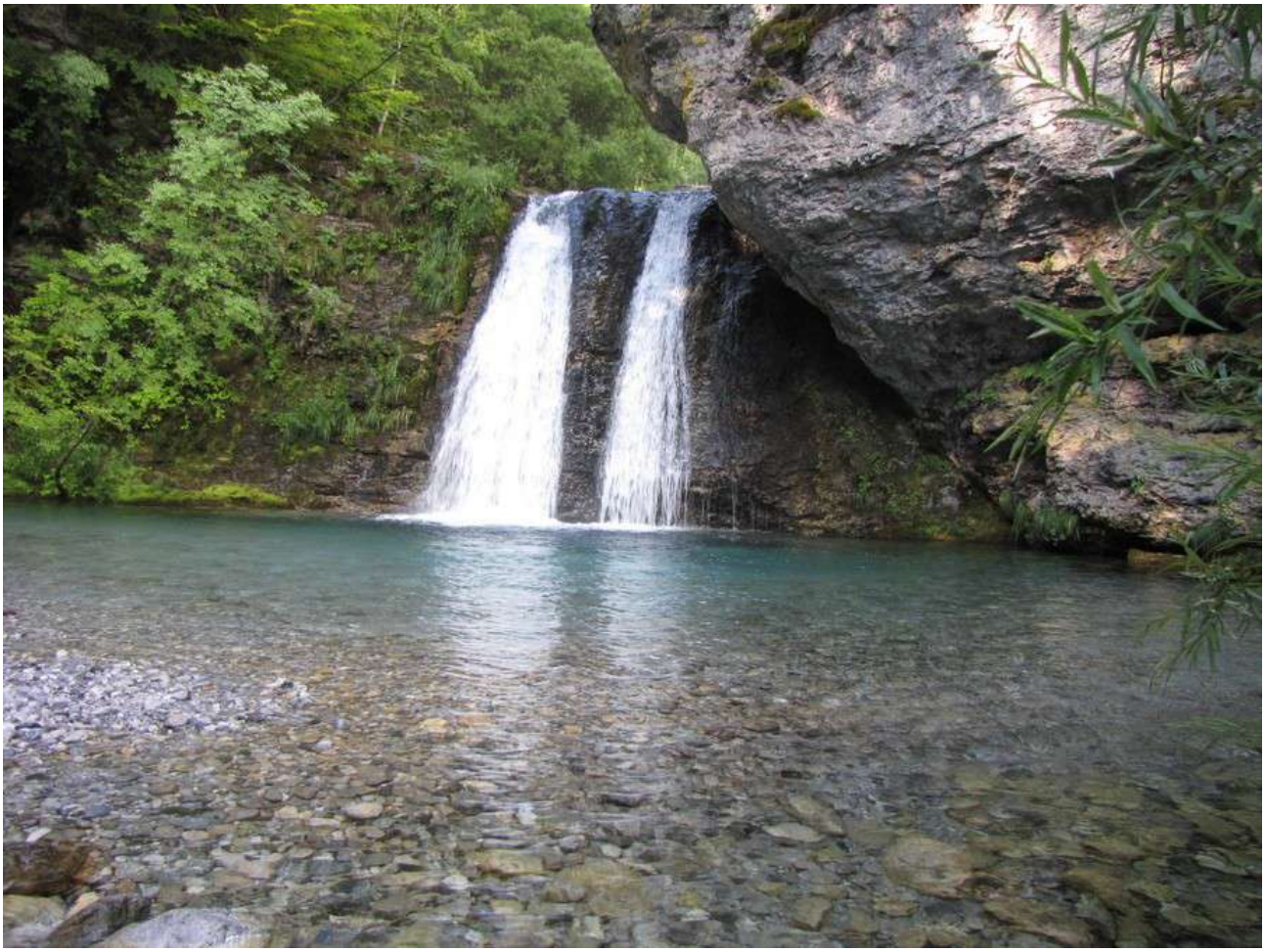
General sights

- Discover the beautiful old town.
- Enjoy the tranquility and the fish restaurants at the fishing port in Gritsa (Map and navigation).
- The market on the eastern side of the park (on Tuesday from 8:00 to ca. 1:00)
- The Enipeas gorge offers you an effortless view of the mountains. You walk on a completely flat path. The river Enipeas flows down in the gorge, in front of you is the summit region. This route is also suitable for older people. (Map and navigation)

Enipeas Gorge

For all who have an appetite for a mountain hike: The European hiking trail E4 runs here, which leads you to the old monastery of Agios Dionysios and from there to the summits.

Swimming in the River Enipeas



Enipeas River

First follow the path from the old monastery of Agios Dionysios to the chapel of the saint. Where the path divides, before you cross the river, turn right and follow the course of the Enipeas upwards. After a few minutes you will reach a waterfall that pours into a natural pond. Let your legs dangle in the water or go swimming. Definitely enjoy the beauty of nature.

Monastery Agios Dionysios

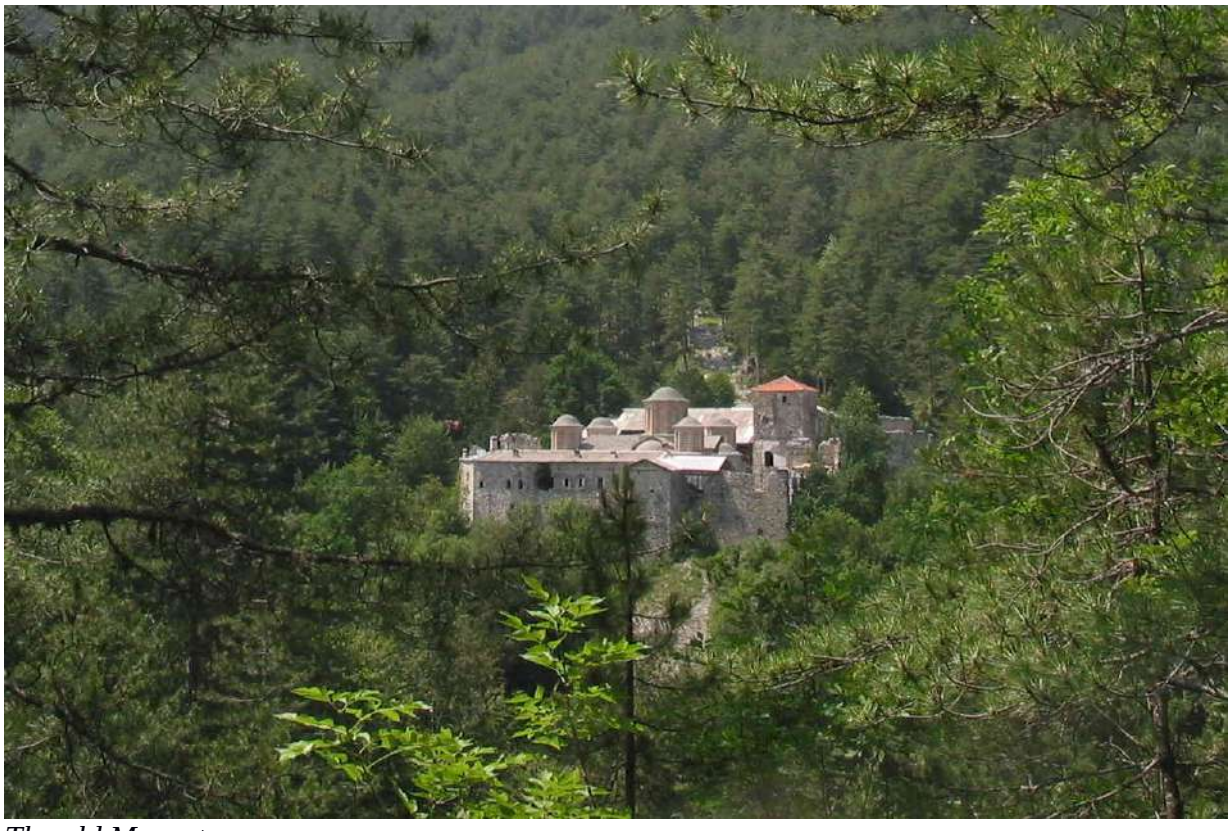
Most important

- Inhabited by monks
- Valuable exhibits in the museum
- Chapel of Saint Dionysios in the Enipeas gorge
- Phone: 23520-21121
- Coordinates old monastery: **Map and navigation**
- Coordinates new monastery: **Map and navigation**

There are two monasteries baring the same name.

The older of the two is located at the Enipeas Gorge at an altitude of 850 m. The younger monastery is located about two km outside of Litochoro. Both monasteries are to reach by car easily.

Originally the name was Agia Triada, Holy Trinity. Over time, however, the name of its founder, St. Dionysios, has prevailed. The new monastery was named after him.



The old Monastery

History

The Monastery Before the Destruction. (Picture taken by a soldier of the German Wehrmacht)

The old monastery was founded in 1542 and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Surrounded by strong walls and dominated by a watchtower, it resembles a small fortress. During various conflicts, it served as a haven for civilians, but also for fighting troops. Today, the visitor sees a ruin from the outside. In its history, the monastery was several times destroyed and rebuilt. In 1821 Veli Pasha burned it down. The last destructive blow came from the German Wehrmacht in April 1943. Because Greek freedom fighters are said to have hidden in the monastery area, it was first bombed and later blown up.

The monks left the destroyed monastery and moved to the Metochi, the manor of the monastery near Litochoro. The Metochi was founded in 1650 and consisted, except the lands, of only one church, the farm buildings and buildings in which the monks lived, who did the farming. After the Second World War the estate was gradually expanded to a monastery. The older part of the new monastery is equipped with a heavy iron door and so separated (from the rest of the complex). Access to this area, the Abaton, is only allowed for men. Here we find the old church, the cells of the monks, the refectory and the administration building. Just outside are the stables, workshops and cheese factory. All other buildings, outside the Abaton, such as the new church or the museum, were built after 1985.

The Church

It was built in the classical orthodox style. An image of Saint Dionysios adorns the entrance. Inside, in addition to the usual sumptuous facilities of an Orthodox church, there are some special features. It is striking that many chairs, desks and other objects are decorated with inlays made of ivory or mother-of-pearl (tiles). Former grenade casings are used as flower vases. An artist has worked out of the metal in relief technique ecclesiastical motives. On a small table stands an icon picturing the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Next to it a basket with pieces of paper and pens. Believers who want to appeal to the saint can put it on paper here.

The Museum

It is located in the west of the complex. In troubled times, of which the old monastery experienced some, brave monks hid the monastic treasure in secret vaults.

Taking pictures in the museum is prohibited

Part of the Museum

A selection of salvaged exhibits:

- Three silver skulls with sacred bones inwrought into it are displayed along with other relics.
- Documents, including the document from the year 949 of the Islamic calendar (1542 AD), in which the Turkish occupiers allowed the repair (actually rather the founding) of a monastery on Mount Olympus
- Through a magnifying glass one can admire the finest wood carvings within a metal cross.
- An epitaph embroidered with gold threads, made in the years 1578/79 by Arsenius, a monk of the Meteora monasteries
- Some of the rescued icons
- Inlaid standing desks and much more

Quite inconspicuous but significant, some framed black-and-white photographs hang near the entrance. They show the old monastery a moment before its destruction. A soldier from the Wehrmacht photographed secretly at that time and sent the pictures to the monastery a few years ago.

The Chapel of Agios Dionysios

The Chapel of the Saint

In a twenty-minutes walk from the old monastery the Chapel of St. Dionysios is located on the Enipeas River, the path is marked. Those who climb from Litochoro to Prionia, inevitably come past the Chapel. It is built directly under an overhanging rock and over a spring. In a small prayer room the saint is said to have celebrated the sacred liturgy during his time as a hermit. A low shed served him as a place to sleep.

Olympus National Park Information Center

Most important

- Definitely recommended for visitors to the National Park!
- The modern exhibition informs its visitors about the mountain.
- Phone: 23520-83000
- **Map and navigation**

It is located about one kilometer out of the village of Litochoro on the road towards the summits, opposite the extensive sports complex, and is signposted. Anyone interested in the National Park should check out here before visiting the mountains. Subjects of the exhibition are ancient sites, animals, geology, history, monasteries, mythology and plants.

Information Boards showing Animals and Plants

Purpose

The building houses the offices of the National Park Administration, the exhibition, a library, various meeting rooms and a spacious atrium for events. The facility establishes the link between the National Park Administration and the public. The visitor is given an overall picture of the mountains.

Mount Olympus

Mount Olympus was established in 1938 as the first national park in Greece. Because of its uniqueness, the UNESCO declared the mountains a Biosphere Reservation in 1981.

It is the highest mountain range in Greece with more than 50 peaks, of which the Mytikas with 2918 meters towers above all the others. On August 2, 1913, the Mytikas was climbed the first time by the Swiss Boissonnas and Baud-Bovy under the leadership of the mountain guide Christos Kakkalos, who was born in Litochoro.

Occurring animal species on Mount Olympus include wild boar, wolf, brown bear, chamois, deer, etc. The rich flora includes more than 20 endemic plants. Among the flora one can find some beautyful orchids.

Exhibition

At the beginning of the tour, visitors should watch an informative film about Mount Olympus. The exhibition was designed by the Goulandris Museum of Natural History, Athens. It is divided into seven areas, which illustrate the characteristics of the different zones of the mountain. Distributed over several half-floors, there are large-format display boards which inform about relevant topics in Greek and English. With each increase in the exhibition, the next altitude of the mountain is shown and the prevailing flora and fauna are presented. Sights beyond nature are treated on separate boards. This refers to archaeological sites such as Dion or Leivithra. The hiker is made aware of interesting places near the footpaths, such as the monastery of St. Dionysius or the cave of the painter Ithakisios.
The areas in detail:

- Entrance area of the exhibition with the cinema
- The Olympus, from its lowlands to the summits - an overview
- The range of 300 m to 500 m
- Middle zone of the mountain from 500 m to 1400 m
- Boreal forest zone from 1400 m to 2500 m
- Alpine zone from 2500 m to 2918 m
- History of the region

Service

The exhibition itself needs no further explanation. Nevertheless, multilingual guides will assist visitors. At the blackboard one will find a detailed weather report in Greek and English.

Mountain rescue

The summits Mytikas and Stefani, in the background left the chapel of Profitis Elias

The theme does not directly touch the Olympus National Park Information Center but should be mentioned here.

The main players in the mountain rescue are the Litochoro Fire Department and the Hellenic Rescue Team (HRT). In extreme cases, the 2nd EMAK from Thessaloniki is asked for help. Around 20 firefighters are trained for rescue missions in the mountain. The HRT maintains the mountain hut Petrostrunga at about 1940 m altitude. Bigger operations are coordinated by the fire department. Usually, the organization which is able to reach the scene of the accident the fastest is going out to help.

Emergency numbers:

112 — General emergency number
199 — Emergency call of the fire brigade
2310-310649 — emergency number of the headquarters of the Hellenic Rescue Team in Thessaloniki
The radio frequency 146500, which is intercepted regularly by the fire department (24/365) and by the HRT (at least in spring, summer and autumn).

Nautical Museum

Most important

- Nautical Museum in a mountain village, five km from the sea
- Worth seeing ship models
- Temporary exhibitions in the summer
- Phone: 23520-81402
- **Map and navigation**

The museum is located in the building of the municipal administration, Agiou Nikolaou 15, Litochoro, on the first floor.

Model of an Ancient Sailboat

Exhibition

Anchors, buoys, propellers and a torpedo are displayed in front of the building. Although the museum is dedicated to the commercial shipping, the tour of the exhibition begins with a model of a torpedo boat that sank a Turkish warship in 1912 in front of the port of Thessaloniki. Pictures, some of them now 100 years old, show proud families in the shipyard watching the construction of their ship. In other photographs, one can see sailors on board or in the harbor. In several showcases are impressive ship models. Some of them are replicas of ships once owned by Litochorians. Others show traditional Greek ship types over the centuries.

Nautical Instruments

Displayed are nautical devices such as compasses, chronometers and sextants. Although displaced by modern technology such as GPS, these are still mandatory on board. If they are missing or do not work properly, penalties are imminent. Furthermore, nautical charts and logarithmic charts are needed to determine the exact position of the ship.

The showpiece of the museum is the complete replica of a conning bridge.
Dedicated to the seafarers, who have not returned from the sea, a commemorative plaque is shown in the museum. It is striking that sometimes whole families fell victim to Poseidon's whims.

Alexandrion

Most important

- Dedicated to Alexander III (the Great)
- Funded by Greek Macedonians from all over the world
- Homage to their homeland
- Phone: 23520-21000
- **Map and navigation**

The Alexandrion is located just north of the Athens — Thessaloniki highway, near the Litochoro exit.

The Alexandrion

The building of the international "Alexander the Great Institute", is a private institution of Greek Macedonians living abroad of their country. They had the idea to erect a monument near the Zeus sanctuary of Dion, which was not only a symbol of the bond with their homeland but also a meeting place. It was founded in 1992, with funding from the Greek state and Macedonians from around the world.

The head office of the institute is in New York (USA), the local directorate is located in Katerini.

Purpose

The objectives of the institute are of charitable, spiritual, social, artistic and cultural kind. The preservation and spread of the Greek language and Greek traditions are of particular value. Exhibitions and seminars are organized, furthermore, the Alexandrion serves representative purposes. Besides the former President Papoulias, other high-ranking domestic and foreign personalities were guests. There are concerts, lectures and guided tours.

Exhibition

All the pictures, displays and exhibits showed in the U-shaped building are related to Alexander the Great. Starting with his birthplace Pella, all stations of his short life are illuminated. The largest exhibition board shows the route of his campaign from Macedonia to India.
Greek and English commented panels of Vergina, Pella and Dion explain Alexander's actions at these places. Worthy of note is a map of all the ancient sites of Macedonia and a copy of the mosaic of the Battle of Alexander against the Persians (Alexander mosaic) from Pompeii.

Chapel of the Prophet Elias (Elijah), Mount Olympus

Most important

- Highest Orthodox church worldwide
- Highest church of the Balkans
- **Map**

In the immediate vicinity of the highest peaks of Mount Olympus (Mytikas and Stefani) lies the 2803-meter-high peak of Profitis Ilias. The nearest mountain huts are the Apostolidis Hut (430 meters away) and the Christos Kakkalos Hut (around 600 meters away).

The Chapel of the Prophet Elias, the Most Elevated Orthodox Church in the World

History

Saint Dionysios, the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Litochoro (see Monastery Agios Dionysios), also founded the chapel of the Prophet Elias in the 16th century. It was built on the ruins of an ancient structure. Dionysios, who lived an ascetic life, is said to have dwelled in the church for a time. The chapel is the highest church building in the Balkans and the Orthodox Church worldwide.

The Chapel

The chapel was built on top of Mount Profitis Ilias. The building materials came mainly of the surrounding stones. The floor of the chapel is covered with stone slabs, the outer walls are made of layered stones, without further connecting material. The stone-tiled roof is supported by a solid wooden construction to support the snow load. A small court is protected on the eastern and southern sides by a stone wall.
Inside of the little church hang some icons. A small altar offers believers the opportunity to light a candle.

Platamonas and Skotina

Platamonas

Platamonas is located directly on the Olympic Riviera. A tranquil hamlet, which has gained a certain importance through its castle in ancient times. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the place consisted of a few houses. Only in the course of the population exchange with Turkey did the population increase significantly. In addition to tourism, the main source of income for residents is fishing. A few years ago, the port was greatly expanded, so that it now also offers larger yachts the opportunity to moor. A promenade right by the sea invites you to stroll, the main attractions are the castle and the harbor.

Platamonas, the Village and the Harbour

Skotina

Tavern at the Beach

The place Skotina is actually divided into three different localities. The original, hardly inhabited Ano Skotina, the village of Skotina itself and Skotina Beach. The name Skotina comes from the old art of clothing, carpet and fabric production from wool. In the past, alongside agriculture, this was the main branch of the population. Ano Skotina lies around 700 m above sea level on the eastern slope of Mount Olympus. For the sake of convenience, however, its residents have relocated to the lower (30m to approx. 200m altitude) Skotina. At first there were only tool sheds and smaller dormitories that the residents of the upper village needed to cultivate their fields. Gradually, the life of the place shifted to the more convenient settlement. Skotina Beach was the last of the three settlements and looks quite deserted in winter.

Castle of Platamonas, disputed Checkpoint between Land and Sea

Most important

- Built above the ancient Heraklion
- First mentioned in pre-Christian times
- Expansion of the castle by Franconian crusaders, not fully explored yet
- Video about the Castle of Platamonas
- For further information see the book „The Castle at Platamonas“ written by Katia Loverdou-Tsigarida. ISBN: 978-960-214-605-7
- **Map and navigation**

The castle is the landmark of the village Platamonas. It is located on a rock right on the Aegean Sea.

A Medieval Cannon Watches Over the Sea Area

History

Archaeologists found evidence that the first settlement of the castle hill already took place during the Bronze Age. The castle was built in the area of the ancient city of Heraklion, which probably stretched from the top of the hill to its feet. Along the hill ran the most used north-south connection of the country.

In the year 430 BC, the Athenians conquered the place to control the Thermaic Gulf from here to their possessions on the Chalkidiki. At the beginning of the 3rd century BC, the city and the now built port were destroyed. How, or by whom, is not known. Later, the region fell into the hands of the Romans. From the time of Christ's birth to the Middle Byzantine epoch of the 10th century AD, few traces have survived. The name Platamon for the area around the hill appears for the first time. Homer used the term to refer to a rock washed by the sea. The first description of the town of Platamon dates back to the 12th century, and the castle itself is mentioned for the first time.

In 1204 Franconian knights, in the course of their conquest of Constantinople, founded the kingdom of Thessaloniki which included the fortress of Platamonas. They finally finished the bulwark but had to vacate it again in 1217 in order to give it to the Komnenos, a Byzantine noble family. The further history of the place remains changeable. The Ottomans arrived at the end of the 14th century and were replaced by the Venetians in 1425. These lasted until the reign of the Ottomans in Greece began in 1453.

The last fighting took place during the Second World War. New Zealand troops had made their head-quarters on the castle grounds.

During the construction of a railway tunnel through the castle hill, further foundations of buildings were discovered, which are assigned to the historic city of Heraklion.

The Castle

A footpath leads from the parking lot up to the castle gate. The walled space includes the former city of Platamon and the actual castle. The extensive area is laid out as a polygon and had towers at irregular intervals. At the foot of the hill, to the left and right of the promontory that juts out into the sea, are two more towers. Within the castle complex, only the main tower in the western part, which is surrounded by its own wall, is preserved. In fighting, here was the last refuge of the inhabitants. A visit to the tower is not possible.

The gate, narrow for strategic reasons, was easy to defend. Preserved are the ground-plans of churches, houses, a forge, a pottery and other buildings, as well as cisterns and cannons from the late Middle Ages. In one of the churches 160 cannonballs were stored.

The defensive walls have a height of 7.50 to 9.50 m and have a thickness of 1.20 to 2 m. Over the centuries, they were raised; some of the different sections are still visible today. Except for the destroyed upper part of the bastion in the east, they are well-preserved and walkable in several places. Enjoy the view over the beaches of Mount Olympus, Thessaloniki and the Chalkidiki peninsula.

Church Agios Athanasios, Ano Skotina

Most important

- Post-Byzantine church in an idyllic location
- No bell tower, the bell hangs on a huge hollow plane tree
- **Map and navigation**

The mountain village of Ano Skotina is located 5.5 km from the coast, the church is build 730 m above sea level on the outskirts of the village. The huge hollow plane tree on the square next to the building gives the place a special charm. The bell from 1920, which is attached to a chain on a branch, is remarkable. Over the decades, the chain has grown into the wood.

The Church Agios Athanasios

Don't miss a look at the Aegean Sea. You have a clear view from Thessaloniki to the castle of Platamonas. On clear days you can even see the Halkidiki peninsula and the holy Mount Athos opposite.

The Iconostasis

History

According to an inscription at the north entrance, the building dates from 1656. In its current form, it has existed since 1862. This is indicated by bricks in the gable of the west side.

The Building

A covered walkway is built on the west and north sides. From there one can reach the interior of the church. The floor is covered with stone slabs, benches invite the visitors to rest. Natural stones were used for the construction. The roof is covered with tiles that lie on a solid wooden structure. Like most

The Church Bell

rural churches on Mount Olympus, Agios Athanasios has only one central nave, with the apse on the east side of the building.

The Walkway

The apse is separated from the prayer room by a carved wooden iconostasis. It is 6.40 m long, reaches a height of 4.30 m and extends up to the visible roof beams. The church is currently (2020) closed, the roof beams have been supported to prevent them from collapsing, and the masonry has been torn in places.

Murals

A picture of Saint Athanasios, framed by flowers, was painted in a niche above the west entrance. The plastered interior walls were decorated with pictures of saints and stations from the life of Jesus. The picture galleries are arranged in four to five rows one above the other and delimited by red lines.

Vrondou

In the shadow of other attractions on Mount Olympus, the three churches west of Vrondou at the foot of the mountains show their own charm. They are easily accessible and are within a circle of one kilometer. After the tour, you can refresh yourself in a natural pond fed by a waterfall (the water has a pleasant temperature in summer). So don't forget your bathing suit.

Ruins of the Old Village

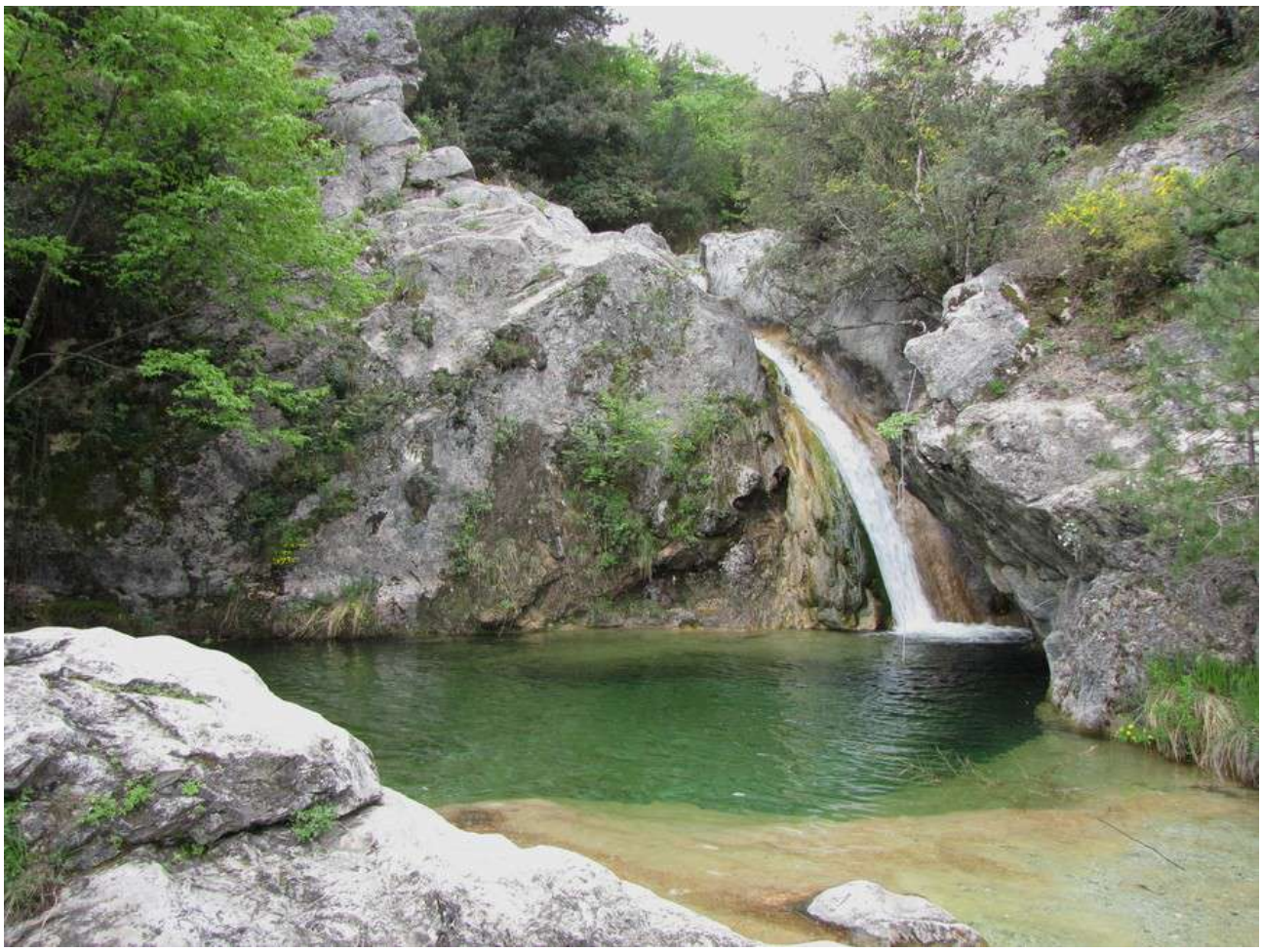
First of all, it is important to know that there are two places with the same name. First the modern village of Vrondou, which you cross to get to the churches, and then the ruins of the old village.

The "Platia", the Central Place of Every Greek Village

The first archaeological evidence of the settlement dates from the 14th century AD. The old Vrondou was destroyed during the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. The residents rebuilt it four km northeast.

The main sources of income are agriculture and the breeding of different livestock. On the way to the village you will notice many kiwi plantations. If you leave modern Vrondou towards the mountains, you will pass several farms, cattle, pigs, sheep and goats stroll around in nature.

Swimming near Agia Kori



Waterfall With a Natural Pond Near Agia Kori

Those who are tired after the ascent of Agia Kori can then refresh themselves nearby. A small forest path leads from the parking lot in a southwesterly direction. A sign in Greek (ΚΑΤΑΡΑΚΤΕΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΚΟΡΗΣ) shows the direction. After a few minutes you will reach a wooden bridge over which you can reach a small waterfall with a natural pond.

Map and navigation

Church Agios Nicholaos

Most important

- Near the churches of Agia Triada and Agia Kori
- In need of renovation, remarkable original condition
- Painted iconostasis
- **Map and navigation**

The Church, in the Background the Plain of Katerini

The church is located on the eastern edge of the ruins of the destroyed village old Vrondou, on the edge of a gorge, about four km southwest of the modern village.

History

The church has existed in its current form since 1871, a stone slab in the wall above the south door shows the year of the renovation. Two candlesticks in the narthex date from 1760. The iconostasis was probably made in the late 17th or early 18th century.

Part of the Iconostasis

The Building

The church is made of field stones and covered with tiles. The bell tower is integrated into the wall surrounding the property, it also forms the entry to the building. The church has three naves with a narthex. A covered walkway is built on the west and south side.

The roof is designed as a vault that is supported by columns that also separate the naves. The pillars are unadorned and all braced against each other with wooden beams. The walls are painted white, murals are rare. In the middle of the ceiling, as is common in Orthodox churches, a picture of the Pantocrator was painted.

The Narthex is to be accessed through the door on the west side, the gate on the south side leads directly into the church. The door frame is made of stone, on the top it is labeled with the name of the church, on the side it is decorated with ornaments.

One of the Niches

The bottom of the narthex is covered with pebbles. The wooden partition to the prayer room is used as a place to display smaller icons. On the right is a stone basin that may have been used for the christening ceremony or in which holy water was kept. On the left side, a staircase leads to a gallery that extends over the entire narthex. It consists of simple boards that have been laid on beams. To the left and right of the entrance to the church are the two marble candlesticks.

The prayer room is covered with stone slabs. The iconostasis is no longer complete, and parts of the carved upper edge are missing.

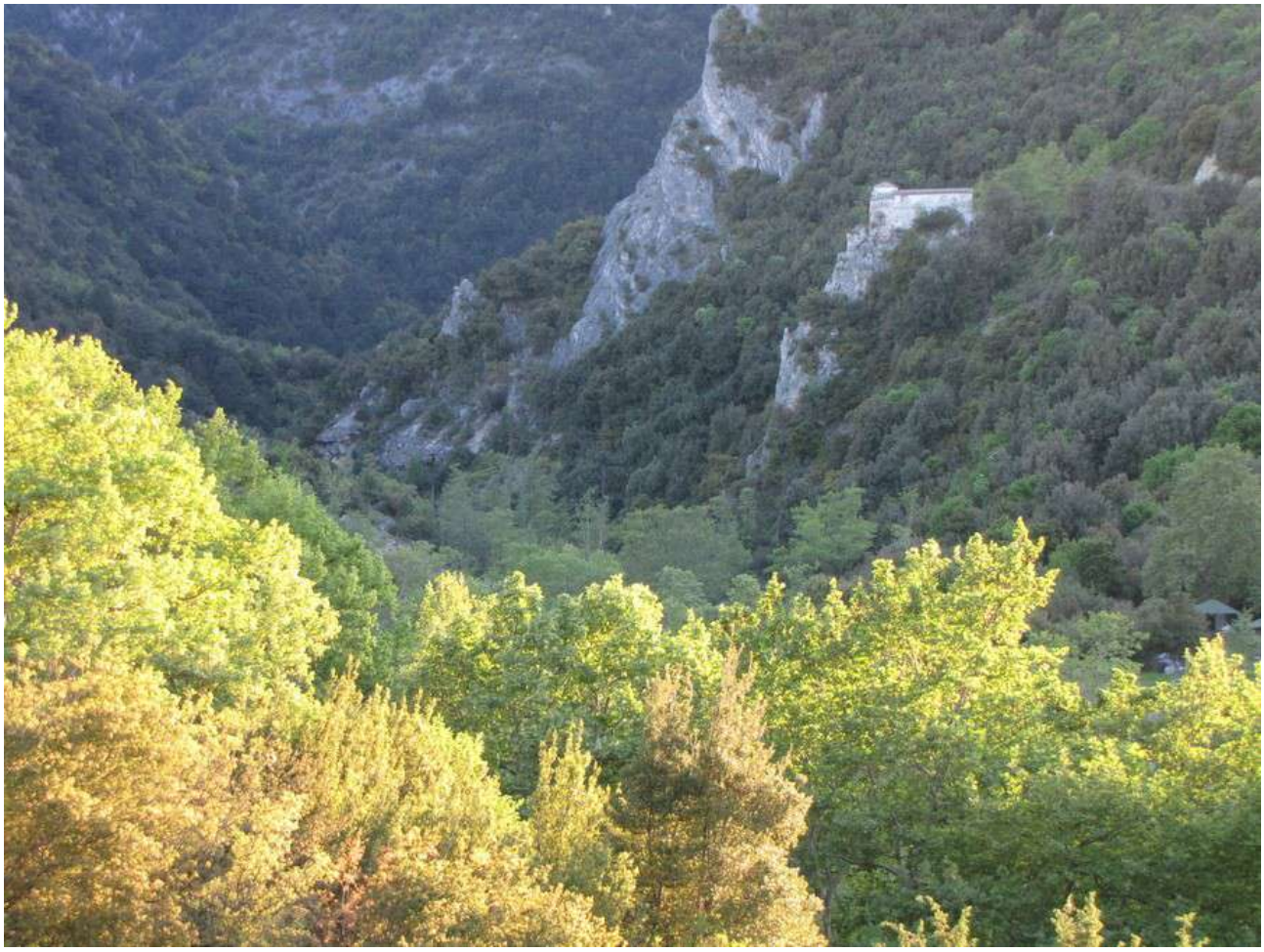
Round murals with biblical motifs can be seen above the central columns. A few semicircular niches are embedded in the outer wall, which are painted and decorated with icons. The floor of the apse is covered with terracotta tiles, the outer wall is painted with pictures of saints.

Church Agia Triada

Most important

- Near the churches of Agios Nicholaos and Agia Kori
- Unique location on the edge of a gorge
- **Map and navigation**

The Church of Agia Triada, near Vrondou, is a very well-preserved post-Byzantine monument. It is located at about 400 m altitude on a rock over a gorge, 4.7 km southwest of the village Vrondou. The church was first mentioned in 1597/1598. In 1758, the building was expanded. An inscription above the front door shows the year 1758 and the name of the bishop Zosim[a] (ζωcιM[α]).



Agia Triada

The Church

It is a single-nave church. Originally it consisted only of a cross-shaped building. In 1758, the front building was erected. The masonry consists of coarse field stones, the roof is covered with stone slabs. On the southern part, a low door leads to a small balcony covered by an iron railing. The view alone is worth the visit of this church: from the abyss directly in front of the balcony to the distant Aegean Sea and to the mountains.

The elder part is mostly preserved in original condition. The walls and the dome are completely painted, mainly with biblical motifs, but also with geometric patterns. The missing upper plaster in some places releases underlying frescoes. The older painting dates from the 16th century.

Different Layers of Painted Plaster

Details of a Mural Painting

The overlying frescoes, probably painted by Macedonian artists, are dated around 1761. An inscription hidden under a mortar layer indicates the 23rd of August 1761 as the date of completion of the works. The wooden iconostasis is partly decorated with carvings, partly painted. The dome depicts Christ surrounded by his disciples.

The front building is more modern. The floor is covered with flagstones framed by terracotta tiles. The walls are plastered, painted white and decorated with icons. The room is lit by oil lamps and candles if required.

Chapel of Agia Kori

Most important

- Near the churches of Agios Nicholaos and Agia Triada
- A legend from the time of Ottoman rule
- Highly frequented by believers
- **Map and navigation**

The chapel is located four kilometers southwest of the village of Vrondou in the vicinity of the church Agia Triada. The chapel can only be reached on foot via a staircase (about 170 steps) that leads down into a ravine.

The Chapel of Agia Kori

The Legend

The holy girl came from the Zagorochoria, the isolated villages in the area of Ioannina. The story began between 1790 and 1810, at the time of Ottoman rule under Ali Pasha. He fell in love with her and wanted to bring her to his harem. Since she was a Christian believer, and she would have had to convert to Muslim belief in the event of a wedding, she wanted not to be married to a Muslim. The bridegroom decided to have his bride forcibly fetched from her parents' home by soldiers. A soldier warned the girl, and she escaped to Mount Olympus in the village of Vrondou. She did not give her name to anyone, fearing that her captors might find her hiding place. She lived in the village for several months until the local commander became aware of her. He reported his discovery to Ioannina and Ali Pasha sent soldiers to fetch her.

Inside the Chapel

She got aware of it and climbed into a ravine near the village. Their pursuers were told that she had fallen down in the ravine, and they returned to Ioannina. Fearing new discovery, she stayed in the gorge and lived there in a small cave. Occasionally she was given some bread and cheese by shepherds, otherwise, she had to be content with what nature offered her. So she lived there for some time until one day there was no sign of life from her. Later, loggers descended into the gorge and found there an intact

skeleton hugging an icon. They remembered the girl who had been hiding here and figured it was her skeleton. While they were digging a grave to bury the remains, a spring suddenly arose at this place. On her grave, the lumberjacks erected a small chapel, which they adorned with the icon that the girl was hugging till her end. Instead of the present bridge, two tree trunks crossed the stream. As time went by, faith in miraculous healings of the girl became established in the population. Many miracles were attributed to her, the circle of believers who sought her help grew.

Today's significance

The water of the spring is considered sacred, it is said to have healing properties. It is drunk as well as used for ablution. Believers make a pilgrimage to the chapel seeking healing for a sick girl. They pray for the healing of the sufferers. They tie pieces of cloth or jewelry, worn by the girl, to the bushes near the chapel. A footpath leads to the cave in which the saint is said to have lived.

Agia Kori is not an official saint of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Cave of Agia Kori with Icons and Devotional Objects

Kondariotissa

The Macedonian kings had bred their horses for the cavalry in the area of present Kondariotissa. The cavalry was the pride of the rulers and next to the dreaded phalanx the most important element of the armed forces.

When Alexander III. (who was later given the name "the Great") was 10 years old, a Thessalian trader came and wanted to sell a horse to King Philip II. Since the animal shied away and could not be mounted, the king had no interest in the business. Alexander recognized the cause of the horse's shyness, mounted it and was able to ride on it. He had realized that the animal was afraid of its own shadow. It's said that his father shouted to him: "My son, find your own kingdom, Macedonia is too small for you". Alexander gave the horse the name Bukephalos, it has accompanied him faithfully for many years.

Alexandros and Bukephalos

Monument at the Central Square of Kondariotissa

Monastery Ephraim

Most important

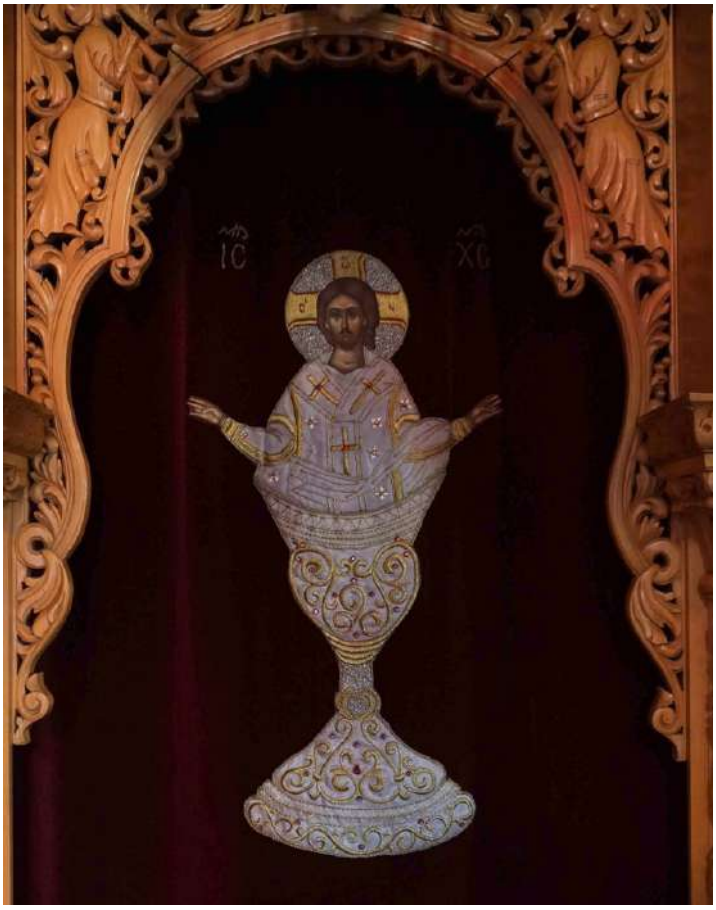
- Convent
- A lovingly designed modern monastery
- Several churches
- Phone: 23510-51591
- **Map and navigation**

The monastery Ephraim, named after Ephraim the Syrian, was founded in 1983 and is inhabited by nuns. It is one of the youngest monasteries in the Olympus region.
The monastery is located on a 151 m high hill, 1.5 km north of the village Kondariotissa and 6 km southwest of the city Katerini.

The Monastery

It is subordinate to the Archdiocese of Kitros, Katerini and Platamonas belonging to the Archdiocese of Athens.

The complex covers about 21 hectares and is surrounded by a wall. Outside the actual monastery, there is a church, an ornamental garden and an olive grove. The center of the monastery is a square planted with a plane tree. To the west are a garden, the church Agia Irini and the administrative building. The buildings on the south side serve to entertain the guests, there is also one of the two exhibitions housing artisanal products of the nuns.



Embroidery

Part of a Church

The nuns home to the North is the largest building in the monastery. To the east of the main church, there is another ornamental garden and a second room where nuns offer their products. North of the garden is an aviary where peacocks, pigeons and chickens are kept.

The Main Church of the Monastery

The Monastery Life

In addition to the general liturgies, individual studies and prayers shape everyday life in the monastery.

According to their abilities, the nuns are doing also other works:

Artistic activities:

- Byzantine icon painting
- Making mosaics
- Production of candlesticks and decorative candles
- Crafting pottery, jewelry and simple decorative items

Further activities:

- Horticulture, including fruit and olive growing
- Floriculture
- Poultry farming
- Production of traditional products, such as pasta and sweets

Some of the goods are offered for sale to the visitors of the monastery.

Church Panagia

Most important

- Oldest Byzantine building at Mount Olympus
- Interesting dome
- **Map and navigation**

Built on a small hill, within a walled area, the church is a very well-preserved Byzantine monument at Mount Olympus, located in the northwest of the village of Kondariotissa, near the Ephraim Monastery, some 6.5 km southwest of Katerini.

Byzantine Church Panagia

The Building

Judging from the shape (morphology) of the building, it was built at the time of the iconoclasm (picture dispute of the Orthodox Church) or slightly earlier. Construction is dated to the 7th century (other sources refer to the beginning of construction between the 7th century and the 10th century). Structural changes took place in the 11th century. In the 15th century, the building was restored. Parts of the exterior wall show various styles of masonry work. The construction of the church is said to be related to the desertion of ancient Dion. The last inhabitants abandoned the city roughly at the time the church was built.

The building measures approximately. 10 m by 11.5 m. Four unadorned, round pillars support massive arches on their capital, which in turn carry a cylindrical dome. It is a small three-nave church with Narthex and Tribelon. It has a chapel each in the north and south part, the southern served as a baptistery, the northern as Hagiasma (the sacred spring). The apse, hidden behind a carved wooden iconostasis, in the western part of the church, is bounded by a three-part window.

Two of the Columns

The apse, dome and parts of the walls are decorated with mural paintings. Nothing remained from the original decorations, the visible frescos date from the 15th century, from the time after the restoration of the church. Some of the terracotta floor tiles are labeled with the name "Dion". The early parts of the structure resemble the basilica of Agia Sophia in Thessaloniki. The same architectural features were found in other Greek churches of the 8th and 9th centuries. Possibly the church was used as a monastery church.

Tile With the Inscription "DION" (ΔΙΟΝ)

A little bit outside but really worth visiting!

Pydna, and the end of the Macedonian Kingdom

Most important

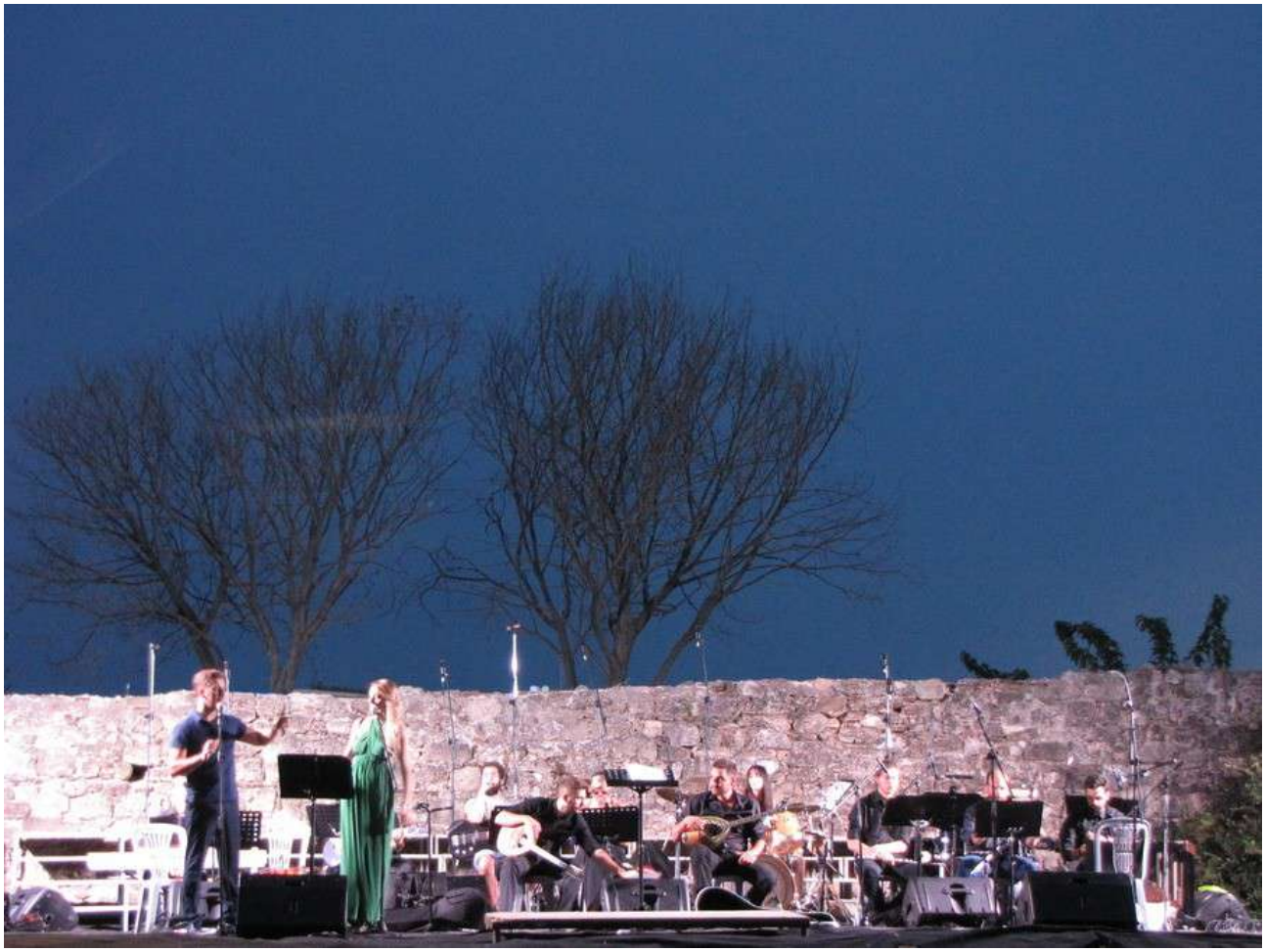
- Protagonists of the Macedonian kingdom and the Roman Empire shaped the fate of Pydna: Archelaus, Philip II, Cassander, Olympias, Perseus, Lucius Aemilius Paullus, Andriscus, Metellus.
- As a result of the lost Battle of Pydna, Macedonia becomes a province of Rome.
- Necropolises – an image of the life and death of that time
- Not fully explored yet
- Video about Ancient Pydna
- **Map and navigation**

Pydna is located directly on the Aegean Sea, 16 km northeast of Katerini and 2.5 km south of the village Makrygialos.

Take a look around. The Axios Loudias National Park is on your left. Here you can watch birds and wild horses. Half-left you see Greece's "second capital", Thessaloniki. Opposite is the Chalkidiki peninsula, more precisely the part called Kassandra.

History

Pydna was first mentioned by the Greek historian Thucydides and gained importance during the Peloponnesian war. The Athenians besieged Pydna in 432 BC. King Archelaus I of Macedonia besieged the city around 410 BC from the land side, while the Athenian fleet took over the siege from the seaside. After Pydna was taken, Archelaus had moved the city 20 stadia (1 stadion = 600 feet (about 183 m)) further inland, in the area of today's Kitros. After Archelaus death, the inhabitants moved back to their previous location near the sea. 357 or 356 BC King Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, conquered the city. 317 BC, Philips widow, Olympias, the mother of Alexander, was killed after the capture of Pydna by King Cassander.



Concert at the Ancient Site of Pydna

Pydna first minted coins in the late 6th century BC. Further coins were discovered from the period between 389 and 379 BC.

Between the 6th and 7th century AD, Pydna was renamed Kitros. It was the most important city of Pieria until the 14th century.

In 1204 Franks took the city after a siege. They turned the Episcopal church into a castle and built a tower where their commander-in-chief, Virich von Daum, resided.

In the 14th century, the inhabitants left the place and settled in today's Kitros.

The Battle of Pydna

After the Romans failed to defeat Macedonia in two wars, defeat came on June 22, 168 BC at the decisive fight near Pydna and Louloudies. It's said that on the Macedonian side, also Thracian and Illyrian soldiers fought.

King Kassander

Reign from 306 B.C. to 297 B.C

He was a Macedonian General and one of the Diadochi, a successor of Alexander the Great.
During his reign, the rule of the Argeades, Macedonians founding family, ended.
Kassander did not take part in Alexander's campaign against the Persians. His father Antipater ruled the empire during the war. That duped Alexander's mother, Olympias, who sought refuge with her family in Epirus.
When Antipater named his friend Polyperchon as his successor before his death, his son Kassander rebelled against this decision.
With the help of Greek allies, he succeeded in driving Polyperchon to the Peloponnese, and Cassander became king of Macedonia.

With around 40,000 men, both forces had roughly the same strength. King Perseus commanded the Macedonian units. The phalanx provided the bulk of the army. The cavalry and infantry were also involved in the battle.

The general Lucius Aemilius Paullus led the Roman army. Using the maniple tactic, the Romans fought with more agility and were more flexible. This tactic allowed the centurions to adapt the combat mode of their soldiers to the course of a battle. Weaknesses of the opponent were exploited immediately.

At the center of the Macedonian battle order stood the phalanx. Left and right of it fought the infantry, which in turn was flanked by the cavalry.

The Roman troop order was almost congruent with the Macedonian. Instead of the phalanx, however, stood the Maniple Phalanx with its flexible tactics. It was supported by war elephants.

At first, the Macedonians retained the upper hand. The Roman soldiers failed to avoid the long lances of the phalanx. Luck turned when the advancing Macedonian phalangites reached uneven, hilly terrain. The men were no longer able to keep their ranks closed. In the resulting gaps, the Romans pushed forward taking advantage of their maneuverability.

The battle ended with the victory of the Roman troops, whose losses were relatively small. About 20,000 Macedonian soldiers were killed. Thousands of the survivors were captured and enslaved. King Perseus was able to escape at first. However, the Romans seized him, and he was presented by Lucius Aemilius Paullus as a trophy on his triumphal procession in Rome. Perseus died a few years later in captivity. Lucius Aemilius Paullus was given the name “Macedonicus”.

Excavations

At the site of ancient Pydna, no intensive excavations have been carried out yet. The visible building remains date from the Byzantine era. The remnants of the city from the Classical, Hellenistic and possibly pre-Greek periods are partially buried under these ruins. The entire complex measures 320 by 130 m.

The earliest settlements from the Mycenaean period (circa 1400 BC) were found in the hills north of the excavation site. From 1000 till about 600 BC, the area was inhabited by Thracians. However, the settlement remains are no longer completely preserved, because the eastern part of the settlement has slipped into the sea.

The city wall was built in the 5th century BC. Sections of it are located 500 meters north of the archaeological site. The exact course of the wall is unknown yet. During excavation work parts of the wall were discovered occasionally. After taking the city, Philip II had the city wall destroyed. The Christianization of Pydna began in the 4th century. At this time, the first basilica was built. At the beginning of the 6th century, a second building was erected. The last built basilica was burnt down after an attack by the Bulgarians. At the end of the 10th century, a much larger basilica was built in its place. It measured 23.20 by 16.60 m. It was decorated with frescoes and the floor was covered with mosaics. As already mentioned, in 1204 Franconian knights altered the building into a fortress. They drilled a 22 m deep well and stored supplies. An example is an amphora where olive oil was stored in. Furthermore, they built a cistern. An underground passage allowed the garrison of the castle to escape to the outside in an emergency.

King Perseus

Reign from 179 B.C. to 168 B.C.

After the death of his father Philip V, Perseus took over the throne of Macedonia in 179 B.C.

After Philip V had already fought two wars against the Roman Empire, also Perseus' behavior gave the Romans no reason to trust him.

Thus it came that the Roman senate in the year 172 B.C. decided the campaign for the third Macedonian war.

After the lost battle of Pydna Perseus could flee at first. The Romans seized him however and he was presented by Lucius Aemilius Paullus as a trophy on his triumphal procession in Rome. Perseus died some years later in Roman captivity.

In the sea-facing apse was a phryctoria, a device for exchanging signals with the opposite peninsula of Chalkidiki. With torches, light signals were transmitted over greater distances. So messages could be transmitted quickly over hundreds of kilometers.

Spolia (remains and fragments of columns, etc.) were worked into the wall surrounding the site. The oldest spolia is a Neolithic idol. The wall was built in two phases. In the 6th century AD, at the time of Justinian I, the first phase of construction took place. It was enlarged in the 10th century and some of the gates were closed. The wall is about 1.40 m thick and was reinforced by rectangular towers. Some remnants of the complex date from the 16th century, the period of occupation of Greece by the Ottomans.

West of the road that once connected Pydna with Dion, the remains of the city walls and a city gate can be seen. Today's course of the traffic route is largely identical to that of the antique road.

The Necropolises

In the environment of ancient Pydna and on the road to Dion are some Macedonian tombs and the necropolises. According to ancient customs, the cemeteries were built along the roads and near the city gates. The oldest tombs are from the Bronze Age, the latest ones from the early Christian period. Minor tumuli (burial mounds) have been eroded over the centuries and are now no longer visible. Most of the works had to be carried out as rescue excavations. The finds, both in ancient Pydna and in the necropolises, show a shrinking population during the period of the second Greek colonization.

Necropolises

The word (necropolis) origins from the Greek language and means „the city of the dead". Today we would call these burial sites cemeteries.

In Greece they were usually placed outside the urban area. There were both, simple graves and monumental splendid buildings, in which one found wall paintings, mosaics, sculptures and valuable grave goods. The Macedonian graves were often created as mounds. The name of the deceased was often engraved on a stone on the burial mound; if this stone is missing, it is unclear who was buried in the grave.

In the necropolises, the change of burying rites and the funeral customs over time can be observed. There were mostly earth burials, cremation of the deceased was rare. The dead were either burned directly in the grave or on wooden platforms. In some cases, the ashes were buried in copper kettles or clay pots. Toddlers were sometimes buried in common clay pots, which were broken for this purpose, and reassembled after embedding the body. In the 5th century BC, male corpses were buried with their head to the west, females with their head to the east. In the skulls of many of the deceased was the so-called Charon's obol, which was put under the tongue of the dead, to pay the ferryman Charon for their transfer of the dead to Hades.

Grave Offerings

In addition to pottery, jewelry, weapons and tools, also richly decorated glass vessels came to light. The vessels were imported mainly from Attica, occasionally from Corinth or other places of the Aegean, some came from local production. Deceased children were often buried with clay figures. The jewelry is usually made of bronze, iron or silver, some are made of bone or gold. In the graves of deceased males weapons were found only in rare cases. Small vessels made of glass or alabaster, which were added to the corpses of women, are usually in good condition. Some of the finds are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Makrygialos, most of them in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.

Louloudies, once a Magnificent Bycantine Fortress

Most important:

- Episcopal seat from Byzantine times
- Fortress and art
- Mosaics
- Graves with mural paintings
- **Map and navigation**

The complex is 2.6 km northeast of the Macedonian tombs of Korinos and 5.8 km south of ancient Pydna. In the mid-19th century, the French archaeologist Léon Heuzey identified the hills northwest of Louloudies as the place where in 168 BC the Battle of Pydna took place.

Example of a Pebble Mosaic

History

In the course of the reconstruction of the railway line Athens — Thessaloniki a fortified bishop seat from Byzantine time was excavated in the Louloudies area. The place was permanently populated since the Mycenaean period until the 7th century AD. It had the character of a village that served as a station between Thessaloniki and Larissa.

The Goths besieged Thessaloniki in 479 AD. In order to avert damage to the city, the magistrate agreed with the besiegers to place some other Macedonian cities under Gothic supervision. Among them were Pella, Pydna, Dion and Veria. Pydna (Kitros) was appointed bishopric, but the bishop resided in Louloudies.

The fortress-like complex was built in the last quarter of the 5th century. It is probably the same area that was called Anamon in Roman records. In the middle of the 6th century, the buildings were destroyed by an earthquake. The bishop left the place, which was later used as a cemetery. In the 7th century, Louloudies was finally abandoned after attacks by "barbarians".

The Facility

The entire complex has a ground area of 80 by 90 m, it was surrounded by a wall. For its defense, four rectangular towers were built, which were at the corners of the bailey. A double gate on the west side was integrated into the wall. The outer gate was provided with a portcullis. On the threshold, one can still see the traces of vehicles that used to drive here. In the first construction phase, a three-aisled basilica (floor plan 35.50 by 19 m) and a residence for the bishop were built. Striking were the reception and the porticos of the building. The floors are decorated with mosaic. Mostly geometric figures are depicted, animal figures are rare. Remnants of a villa from the early 4th century BC under the palace were found. During the reign of Justinian I (527-567 AD), the complex and the premises were expanded. Facilities for the production of wine and olive oil had been established and two warehouses had been built in the southwest corner. Another depot was near the west tower, outside the defensive walls.

Archaeologists discovered eight individual graves with a vaulted ceiling, partly the beautiful paintings have been preserved. In addition a larger number of simple graves were discovered, which date from the 3rd to 6th century AD.

Excavations

The works took place from 1993 to 1997 and were led by the Byzantine Antiquities Authority in Thessaloniki. The railway line divides the excavation site diagonally. The remains of the western defense tower and a section of the wall are located outside the accessible area.

Numerous finds bring some light to the period between the 4th and the 7th century AD, an era in which little information is available for this part of Macedonia. They bear witness to the significance of the bishopric and give hints on the daily life and the existing technology of this time. After the place was finally abandoned by its inhabitants, the workshops ceased production. A sculpture workshop, remnants of a kiln for pottery and melting furnaces for glass products and for metal were found.

Macedonian Tombs at Korinos

Most important

- Monumental graves at the Olympus
- Many of the grave offerings are in the Louvre, in Paris.
- **Map and navigation**

The burial mounds (tumuli) are located east (A) and west (B) of the Athens — Thessaloniki highway, about 600 meters northwest of the outskirts of the village of Korinos.

In December 2019 an event took place in Katerini where Dr. Thanassis Bindas demonstrated that it was the tomb of Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great. A confirmation from the responsible archaeologists is currently, as of 2020, pending.

Macedonian Tomb at Korinos, the Tumulus

Excavation History

The French archaeologist Léon Heuzey discovered grave A during his trip to Greece in 1855. The first description of the site was made in 1860. The excavations began a year later. Together with Honoré Domet Heuzey published his findings in 1876.

The archaeologist Matheos Besios reopened grave A in 1991. In the same year, he discovered grave B.

Both burial chambers had already been looted by robbers. These had removed the keystones of the vaults and thus gained access. It is unknown who was buried here, but the elaborate construction points to important people. Heuzey had moved almost all transportable artifacts (except for a stone block with the relief of a snake, two doors and smaller finds) to France. They are either exhibited or stored there in the Louvre, in Paris. The exact building-date of the grave vault was controversial. Recent findings point to the construction of tombs in the late 4th century BC and their use until the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

Olympias

Born 375 B.C., deceased 316 B.C.

She came from the family of the Molossians, who lived in the Epirus mountains.

Around 357 B.C. she married King Philip II and one year later gave birth to her son, Alexander (the Great), whom she raised in her spirit and with whom she had a close relationship.

In the fight for the Macedonian throne after the death of Antipater, she took sides with Polyperchon and made him her commander in chief. Because she ordered the assassination of noble Macedonians, among them Cassander's brother, she lost the support of the population. During the battles against Antipater's son Cassander, she and her family withdrew to Pydna. Cassander besieged Pydna and conquered the city in 316 B.C. After taking the city, he had Olympias executed.

Excavations

Both tombs are clearly recognizable as burial mounds. They are overgrown with grass and pine trees. Both tombs are not located in the center of the tumulus, but left of the main axis (seen from the entrance), probably to deceive grave robbers. As it was customary in Macedonia at that time, the buildings were erected during the lifetime of the person(s) later to be buried in.

Grave A

It is located directly at the motorway service area at Korinos and is accessible from there. The hill has a diameter of 60 m and a height of 15 m. The total length of the tomb is 22 m. This is the largest Macedonian tomb ever discovered in Pieria so far. The outer entrance, which is over four meters long, was filled

with mud, bricks or stones on both sides; the individual layers can be easily distinguished. The facade is only partially preserved and has been reconstructed. Heuzey had found it still intact. The tomb was once closed by a wall and behind it, by marble gates, these are modeled like wooden doors. There are imaginary fittings and nails to recognize. Both doors are still preserved. Recesses indicate that originally bronze rings were attached to it. The passage (dromos) leads to the first antechamber, it has a clear slope and diminishes in height. It is built of stone blocks that were once plastered. The ceiling is rounded (round barrel) and closed at its highest point with headstones. Colored remnants show that the plaster was once painted. The painting imitated a marble structure. The floor of the corridor consists of a pebble mosaic pavement.

The approximately 11 m long and 2 m wide Dromos opens into a forecourt (courtyard), which is decorated by a Doric entablature and a frieze with six Triglyphs. Remains of red paint are clearly visible. An opening leads from the courtyard into the 1.5 m long and 3 m wide antechamber of the tomb.

The 3 x 4 m burial chamber itself was protected by heavy gates and could be opened by a mechanical device. The forecourt, the antechamber and the burial chamber are covered by a common vault.

It is believed that a couple was buried here. A dog guarded the kline, which is probably assigned to the man, the second kline was protected by a snake. The chamber was plastered and painted, there are holders for grave offerings. Only the bones of the deceased, potsherds and an oil lamp were found. As inscriptions (from 1948 onwards) show, the grave was used at times by herdsmen to house their animals.

Grave B

The smaller grave B is located west of the highway and south of the motorway service area Korinos. It is accessible from a parallel street. The tumulus has a diameter of 40 m and is 13 m high. The tomb consists of a vaulted corridor, a 1.5 by 3 m measuring antechamber and the 3 by 3 m burial chamber. The antechamber was secured by a wall and a double-winged gate. The gate was broken, restored and mounted again. It was carved out of limestone, was once plastered and is very heavy. The floors of the antechamber and the tomb are covered with flagstones, the walls are decorated with a meander.

In the burial chamber remains of a cremation and a body burial were discovered. Preserved are stone bases, on which presumably wooden couches rested. The chamber is painted with a circumferential frieze. As remaining grave goods two bronze coins, two leg protections, ceramics and fragments of other objects were found. On the walls and the ceiling mounts for other grave offerings are attached.

Monastery Panagia Makrirachi

Most important

- Convent
- Lovingly designed monastery complex
- Spring, whose water is said to have healing properties
- Can be combined with a visit to the Agios Athanasios monastery, about 12 km away, and the northern archaeological sites
- Phone: 23510-83372
- **Map and navigation**

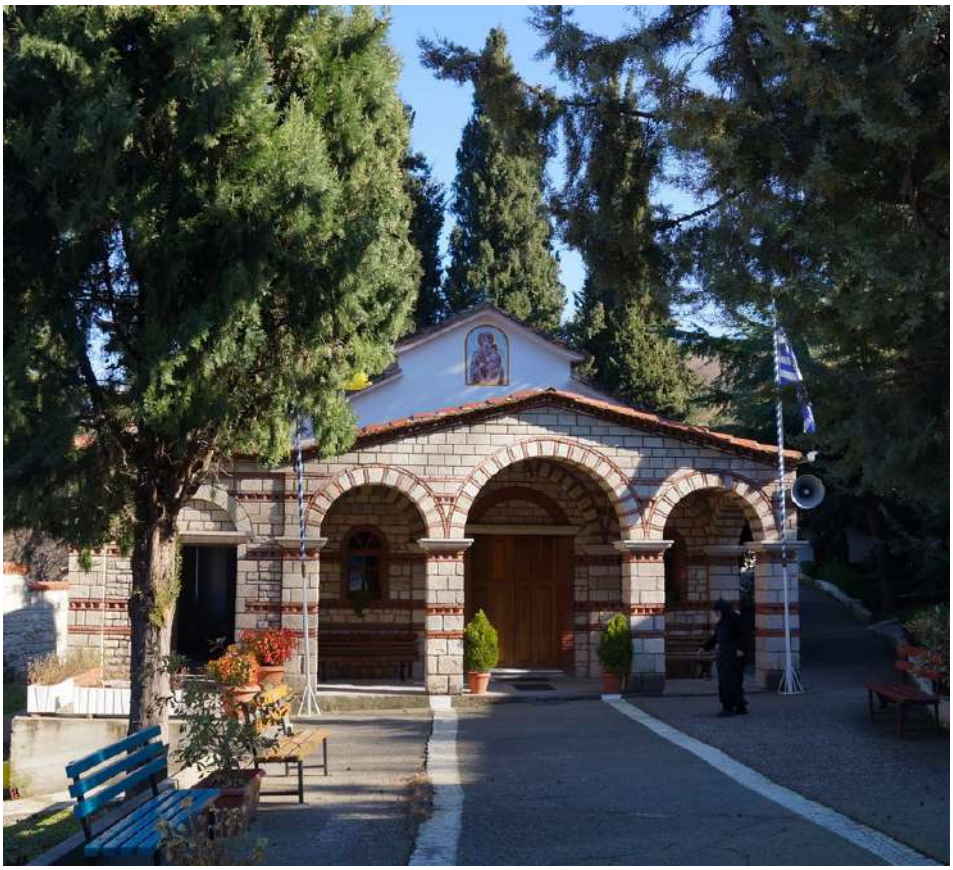
The monastery is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and is located about 20 km north - northwest of the city Katerini, about three km west of the village of Paleostani. Those who like to discover the gentle hilly landscape east of Mount Olympus will find the monastery a worthwhile destination.

History

The Entrance of the Monastery

The monastery was founded in the 10th or 11th century, but unfortunately no documents of that time are available. It was inhabited by monks and was under the patronage of the Patriarch of Constantinople. During the occupation of Greece by the Ottomans, the monastery was destroyed twice. Like other monasteries in the region, the monks offered the Greek freedom fighters support and shelter. The reprisals were terrible, and in 1821 the abbey was completely destroyed. It was rebuilt, but already in 1878, during the uprising on Olympus, the monastery suffered the same fate. Again it actively participated in the resistance against the oppressors and again it was destroyed for this. Only in 1993 it was repopulated by a sisterhood of nuns. The inhabitants of the surrounding villages helped with the construction, several donors generously contributed to the construction costs.

The monastery



The Church

Embedded in almost untouched nature, the monastery appears at the end of a winding road. Two mosaics worth seeing are embedded in niches on the left and right of the gate. All the buildings within the complex are of recent date, only the fountain west of the parking lot dates back to times long past. The way into the monastery leads the visitor directly to the church. It was built of hewn stones, which are interrupted by decorative brick elements. At the gable you can see a picture of the Virgin Mary with Jesus on her lap. There is no bell tower, the church bell was placed outside the church. The well-kept flower beds leave no doubt that the monastery is inhabited by women. Next to the church is the administrative building. The nuns have their cells there. Guests are also welcomed here, a small area is used to sell all kinds of devotional objects. For self-sufficiency the inhabitants keep some chickens and have created a vegetable garden.

The church

It is a three-aisled construction with a vaulted central ceiling supported by round columns. Before entering the prayer room, one pass through a small narthex. At first one will notice the simply worked iconostasis, which reminds of a wall paneling with its embedded icons. Only the door to the apse is carved and painted.

The floor is covered with marble in which mosaics have been embedded. Some years ago the floor construction had to be renewed. The earth under the church had sunk. Above the central mosaic, which shows a double eagle, the church ceiling was painted with a picture of the pantocrator. The wall opposite the apse is decorated with a large painting. A very valuable icon of the Blessed Virgin hangs over a ledge, the front of which is decorated with a marble mosaic. Opposite the icon is the carved bishop's throne.

Interior of the Church Seen From the Narthex

The holy spring

Outside the monastery walls a path leads to an inconspicuous small building. Inside the cottage, a spring of holy water gushes out of a marble fountain, which is said to have healing properties. Once a man from Veria sought help for his mentally ill wife. They went to different doctors, but nobody could help her. One night the man dreamt that the water of a holy spring near the Panagia Makrirachi monastery would cure his wife. The monastery gave him permission to dig at the spot that appeared in his dream. In fact, he found a spring there whose water freed his wife from her illness. Since then the holy water is said to have brought about several healings.

The Holy Spring

Monastery Agios Athanasios

Most important

- Convent
- New, spacious monastery complex with many interesting details
- Can be combined with a visit to the Panagia Makrirachi monastery, about 12 km away, and the northern archaeological sites
- Phone: 23530-31122
- **Map and navigation**

The monastery is located on a hill about three km south of Kolindros and about 21 km north of Katerini.

History

The Church

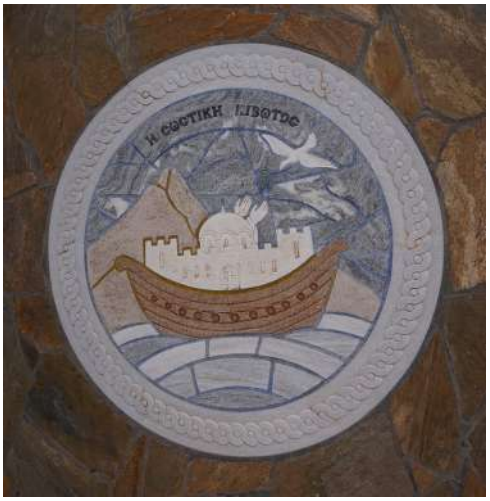
The date of the foundation of the monastery is unknown. The original documents were lost a long time ago. According to local residents, it has existed as a monastery, inhabited by monks, for centuries. During the Second World War, the last remaining cells of the old abbey were completely destroyed. Only the church survived the fighting, but was in poor condition. In the early 1980s, Kolindros residents began building a new church to replace the previous one. In 1987 the rebuilding monastery was occupied by nuns who helped to rebuild it; construction works were completed in 1991.

The monastery

The visitor enters the complex through a gatehouse. Under the gable a picture of Saint Athanasios was painted. In the back of the house is a mosaic of the Saint Nectarios embedded in a niche. Notice how the artist depicts the vivid facial features and drapery of the robe.

Mosaic of Saint Nectarios

The rose bushes and decorative beds leave no doubt that the area is inhabited by women. The courtyard is laid out with stone slabs, partly decorated with terra-cotta elements. The path to the church is bordered by a meander, which is known as a braid or rope ornament. If you look closely, you will discover many artistic details. For example, Noah's ark with the inscription "Η ΣΩΣΤΙΚΗ ΚΙΒΩΤΟΣ" or the mosaic with two deer drinking from a stream.



Noah's Ark

In front of the buildings, partly clad with natural stones, to the left and right of the path and in front of the church there are colonnades. Saint Athanasios is pictured next to a door. In the foreground you can see a faithful representation of the monastery church, which is protected by the saint.

If you want to linger a little, you will find inviting places to rest. Some offer a beautiful view of the surrounding hilly landscape.

The nuns take care of a vegetable garden and create valuable handicrafts. A showpiece is the velvet curtain decorated with gold,- silver threads and gemstones, which separates the prayer room of the church from the apse.

Protector of the Monastery

The church

The Velvet Curtain

The construction corresponds to a three-nave basilica with a spacious narthex. The building materials used are striking: worked stones in two different colours and bricks. The different coloured stones were cleverly combined. They were built up in alternation, and bricks were worked into the joints. Again and again bricks were also used as decorations in the facade. Mighty domes, crowned with crosses, are enthroned above the building.

The separate bell tower is build in the same style. The heavy church bells are attached to wooden beams with chains. Unlike the church, which is covered with roof tiles, the tower has a tin roof.

Inside, the church resembles that of Saint Dionysius in Litochoro in many details. One finds similar high desks with inlays, a huge chandelier decorated with images of saints and ostrich eggs, and bullet cases transformed into flower vases.

The floor was covered with marble, the roof construction rests on round columns. The carved iconostasis is magnificent and deserves closer inspection. You will discover masterfully carved figures of saints and animal figures such as eagles and dragons. The already above mentioned red velvet curtain hangs in the middle of the iconostasis.

History and Archaeology — an Overview

During the last decades, numerous ancient sites have been excavated in the surroundings of Mount Olympus. The oldest are from the Neolithic, the most recent ones from the Byzantine period.

Historically and archaeologically significant epochs

Neolithic, circa 6500 to 3000 BC

The area around the Olympus and the Pieria Mountains was populated in the 7th millennium BC, possibly from the east. The surrounding area offered the settlers good living conditions, such as a mild climate, water, fertile farmland, and hunting grounds. Finds from this period come among others from Korinos, Ritini, Pigi Athinas, and Makrygialos. Remnants of settlements have barely been excavated, but graves with various burial objects were found: stone and earthen figures, pottery, bone and stone tools, flint arrowheads, and jewelry made of bone or clay.

Bronze Age, circa 3000 to 1000 BC

The settlement shifted in the Bronze Age from the mountains towards the sea. Metalworking, shipping and, related trade brought some prosperity to the region. The archaeological finds from this period come, among others, from the regions around Platamonas (ancient Heraklion), Aiginio, Methone, Pydna, Pigi Artemidos, Trimbina, Kitros (Louloudies) and Korinos.
In addition to individual tombs necropolis and settlements were discovered. The findings from this period include clay pots and larger storage vessels, metal tools, and weapons, as well as jewelry made of gold, silver, bronze and glass.

Mycenaean Period, circa 1650 to 1050 BC

The late Bronze Age is referred to as the Mycenaean period in southern Greece and Crete, as these areas were under the cultural influence of Mycenae. During this time not only Mycenaean goods were traded in the Mediterranean, people but also adopted the Mycenaean customs. The northern border of the spread of the Mycenaean culture lies in Pieria, further north no signs have been discovered yet.

Iron Age, circa 1000 to 700 BC

The coastal population grew and some Bronze Age settlements were apparently abandoned. People were more likely to settle in places offering natural protection. Existing settlements were fortified, the ancient Methone with a three-meter-high wall. Trade relations were expanded, the Phoenician alphabet introduced and modified for the Greek language.

- displaced settlers from Kerkira (Corfu), who originally came from Eretria (Euboea), settled in ancient Methone during the second half of the 8th century BC.
- In Methone the Greek alphabet was used.
- About 800 BC Leivithra was founded.
- Probably in the second half of the 8th century BC Homer wrote the Odyssey and the Iliad. He laid the foundation for Greek mythology, whose gods resided on the Olympus.

Finds from this period include jewelry, pottery, weapons and tools as well as remnants of wooden grave constructions.
Contrary to tombs near the coast tombs of male deceased in inland Pieria always contain an iron spear-head.

Archaic and Classical Greek Period, circa 700 to 323 BC

- The production of iron has spread across Europe.
- Hesiod wrote the Theogony and thus consolidated the cult of gods of ancient Greece.
- About 700 BC, the Macedonian kingdom was founded.
- In the first half of the 5th century BC Alexander I introduced coinage in the Macedonian kingdom.
- 432 BC Pydna was besieged by the Athenians.
- Around 424 BC Thucydides first mentioned the existence of Dion.
- After the capture of Pydna by Archelaus, 410 BC, he had the city moved 20 stadia far from the coast to the inland.
- End of the 5th century BC King Archelaus relocated the capital of the kingdom from Aegae (now Vergina) to Pella. He introduced the Olympic Games in Dion, a nine-day festival in honor of Zeus and the nine Muses.
- In the 2nd quarter of the 4th century BC, the Macedonian tombs of Katerini were built.

- In the late 4th century BC the Macedonian tombs of Korinos were built. It's assumed that they were used until the beginning of the 3rd century BC.
- 356 BC Alexander III (the Great) was born.
- 354 BC Philip II besieged and defeated Methone.
- Alexander III ruled Macedonia from 336 to 323 BC. During his campaigns, he was represented by the general Antipater.
- Before starting his campaign against the Persians, Alexander sacrificed to the gods in Dion.
- After the battle of Granicus (334 BC), Alexander commissioned the respected sculptor Lysippos to make bronze statues of the 25 horsemen killed during the fighting and place them in the Zeus Olympios sanctuary, Dion.

Hellenistic Period, circa 323 to 146 BC

- 323 BC Alexander the Great died.
- The Antigonids finally took over the rule in Macedonia.
- 219 BC Dion was destroyed by the Aitolians. Philip V had the city rebuilt.
- 179 BC the Macedonian King Perseus sent ambassadors to Rome in order to renew the "good relations" between the two states.
- In the same year, King Perseus initiated an extensive debt cancellation. The reason for this was a bad harvest that drove many of his subjects into indebtedness.
- 169 BC the Romans erected their army camp on the plain between Heraklion (today Platamonas) and Leivithra.
- 168 BC King Perseus was defeated by the Roman army commander Lucius Aemilius Paullus at the Battle of Pydna. Macedonia was divided into four regions, and the Macedonian elite expelled from the country.
- 148 BC with the help of an army of Thracians and the support of the native population, Andriscus tried to liberate Macedonia from the Romans. He was beaten by the Roman general Metellus. Then Rome founded its first province in the east, with Thessaloniki as the capital.

Roman Period, circa 146 BC to 330 AD

- Around 100 BC Leivithra was destroyed by a natural disaster and abandoned by its inhabitants.
- Circa 150 to 200 AD, a temple dedicated to Dionysus was built in Dion.
- In 212 AD, Rome grants Roman citizenship to all inhabitants of the Empire.
- In 285 AD, the empire was divided, the western Roman and eastern Roman Empires emerged.

- In Dion, the Nonae Capratinae was held on July 7 of a year. Female slaves enjoyed certain freedoms during this festival. There was a connection between the worship of Zeus Hypsistos and the Nonae Capratinae.

The archaeological finds from the over 1000-year period, the end of the Iron Age to the end of the Roman rule over Pieria, are very extensive. Dion is the leading archaeological site here. Methone benefited from several years of collaboration with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). This gave valuable insights into the beginnings of the Greek alphabet.
The finds are either displayed in museums or they are stored. The Archaeological Museum in Dion is fully equipped, in the Leivithra Park only replicas can be seen, the finds from Leivithra are stored in Dion. In the Archaeological Museum of Makrygialos smaller artifacts and clay vessels are shown.
Coins, jewelry, clay and glass vessels, weapons, tools, building materials, sarcophagi, funerary steles, statues, statuettes, well enclosures, mosaics, a water organ, and many other pieces were discovered.

Byzantine Period, circa 330 to 1453 AD

- 343 Dion was appointed bishopric, the basilica of the bishop was built in two stages of construction in the 4th and 5th centuries.
- In the last quarter of the 5th century at Louloudies, located near the ancient Pydna, a fortified bishopric was built.
- Dion was last mentioned in the 10th century as an administrative district of Byzantine Emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos.
- 1055, the monastery Kanalon was founded. According to the French archaeologist Heuzey, the foundation could have been even earlier.
- In the 12th century, the name Heraklion was replaced by Platamon.
- In 1204 Franconian knights, during their conquest of Constantinople, founded the kingdom of Thessaloniki, which included the castle of Platamon.
- Foundation of the monastery Agia Triada in Sparmos. Records indicate that the monastery was inhabited at least since the year 1386. The exact date is unknown, it may be older.

Important excavation sites of the Byzantine period are the castle of Platamonas, Louloudies and the castle of Pydna (originally a basilica), which was built by Frankish knights above the ruins of the ancient city. Furthermore, there are numerous churches, such as the Holy Trinity (Agia Triada), located above Vrondou, and the Church Panagia in Kondariotissa.
The main finds from this epoch are mainly of ecclesiastical origin. They are exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Dion, at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki or in the museums of the monasteries.

Glossary

I have tried to avoid technical terms. But finally, if you study the literature or, hopefully, visit the places described above, you will be confronted here and there with lesser-known terms. A small selection:

Abaton	Inaccessible, for certain persons a not to be entered place
Acropolis	Upper town. Located on a hill above the city.
Apse	Semicircular extension of a church that can serve a variety of purposes.
Basilica	Early Christian church, today a title for special churches.
Cavea	Auditorium in Roman theaters
Chthonic deities	In the subterranean underworld living gods.
Destruction layer	A layer of remnants resulting from a sudden destruction (fire, earthquake).
Dromos	Way leading to the burial chamber (s).
Epiphany	Appearance
Ex situ	Not found at the original location.
Extra Muros	Outside the city (walls)
Frigidarium	Cooling pool in a Roman bath
Hetairoi	Macedonian aristocrat elite cavalrymen
Hypocaust heating	Antique heating system in which floors and walls were flowed through by warm air.
Iconoclasm	Image dispute within the Orthodox Church. Started about 730 and lasted for over 100 years.
Iconostasis	A wall in an Orthodox church decorated with icons
Idol	Depiction of a deity
In situ	So found locally
Intra Muros	Within the city (walls)
Katholikon	Church in an orthodox monastery
Centaur	A being half human, half horse
Kline	Couch made of wood or stone were the deceased frequently were buried on.
Koilon	Auditorium in Greek theaters
Lithophagae	In limestone boring seashell. Literally: stone eater
Lysippos	A famous Greek sculptor
Medusa	One of the Gorgons, instead of hair snakes have grown her

Metochi	A monastery hierarchically subordinated to another monastery. Often a farm or a representative office.
Narthex	Vestibule of a basilica or a church
Odeion	Roofed theater
Orchestra	Stage
Pantocrator	The ruler of the world
Phalangites	Soldiers of the phalanx
Phalanx	With long lances, short swords and shields armed troops.
Pithoi	Pottery
Plutarch	Greek philosopher and writer
Praetorium	Originally camp of the commander, here shelter for high officials
Refectory	Dining room (of a monastery)
Satyr	Henchman of Dionysus, often depicted as a human with animal limbs (horns, hooves).
Sebasteion	A temple dedicated to a Roman emperor
Silenos	Similar to the satyr
Semantron	Wooden board in Orthodox monasteries. It is struck with a hammer and calls the inhabitants to the liturgy.
Spolia	Older materials, such as remains of columns, used to build new buildings.
Stauropegion	An Orthodox monastery that is not subject to any diocese but is directly subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul).
Tessera	Mosaic stone, plural Tesserae
Thucydides	Athenian general and historian
Tribelon	Three-parted entrance or access
Triclinium	Antique dining room (usually equipped with three loungers)
Triglyphs	Doric order ornament element (three vertical notches).
Tumulus	Mound grave

Epilogue

The Olympus and its attractions are worth a visit.
In this region visitors will find almost everything Greece has to offer.
Kilometers of sandy beaches as well as a cliff.
Hidden mountain villages, in which hardly a stranger strays or touristic developed places.
Simple taverns or fine restaurants.
The leisurely fishing port at Plaka or the lively marina at Platamonas.

Choose.

Enjoy!

Have a good trip

About the Author

Several years ago, I became interested in Leivithra, an ancient city at Mount Olympus, near the village Leptokarya. Since I nowhere found reliable information, neither about Leivithra nor about other ancient sites at Mount Olympus, I researched myself. To publish my knowledge for the general public, I started writing for Wikipedia. Little by little, the research drew wider circles and links emerged between different cultural institutions in the region. In addition to archaeology, I soon dealt with museums, monasteries and culturally significant organizations.
In December 2018 I decided to combine the individual texts into a book. So the reader sees not only parts, but a wider picture of the region.

Hope you enjoy reading

Jürgen Weidner

Email info.mountolympus@gmail.com

If you are surprised that the chapters on the archaeological sites are so sparsely illustrated, it is because the Greek state does not allow images of its antiquities to be used in books without paying for it.

This book is free. I do not get any income from it. If you like it, please consider donating to the organization "Το χαμόγελο του παιδιού", (to chamojelo tou pediou, the smile of children) in Greece. Your donation benefits needy children. More information can be found here: https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/en/home/

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency

Emercency call	112

Health

Ambulance	166
Hospital Katerini	23510-57200
Ambulance service Litochoro	23520-22222-5

Police

Traffic Police	23510-46644
Police Katerini	23510-46624
Tourist Department	23510-46655
Police Litochoro	23520-81111

Fire Deparment

Emercency call	199

Mountain Rescue	112
	2310-310649 – Emergency number of the Hellenic Rescue Teams (HRT), Thessaloniki
	Radio frequency 146500, HRT and the Fire Department are watching.